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MEMOIRS

1924–1937

In this volume of his *Memoirs* Mr. Clynes tells his personal story of the greatest events of recent years. A creator of the Labour Party, Mr. Clynes describes how he became Lord Privy Seal and Deputy-Leader of the House of Commons in the first British Labour Government in history. MacDonald, the Premier, was much absent, and Clynes " Held the Fort " at Westminster. We learn hitherto untold facts about the Campbell case, which unseated the Government, the famous Zinoviev Letter, and the real reasons for the Arcos Raid. Then Labour returns to office, and Clynes becomes Home Secretary.

The former cotton " piecer " has to tackle grave State problems, be in constant contact with the King, and shape legislation affecting all our lives. Himself disapproving of Capital Punishment, he has to consider Appeals that, if dismissed, will send men to the gallows. He describes his attendance at the birth of Princess Margaret Rose, and writes absorbing chapters on changes in prisons and other phases of the British legal system.

In the 1931 crisis, the Home Secretary plays his part, and we read for the first time what happened at the critical Cabinet Meetings during that fateful time. The Abyssinian crisis, the Abdication and other great events are shown from the statesman's viewpoint ; and great figures flit across every page.

This book is essential to the student, and enthralling to the general reader.

TO MY WIFE, WITHOUT WHOSE HELP AND COMRADESHIP I SHOULD HAVE LITTLE TO RECORD

The Rt. Hon.

J. R. CLYNES

P.C., M.P., D.C.L.

MEMOIRS

1924–1937

WITH SEVENTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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I HAVE TRIED, IN THIS BOOK, TO TELL A TRUE STORY OF MY EXPERIENCES IN BRITISH POLITICS DURING RECENT YEARS. MY ACCOUNT MAY CAUSE DISAPPOINTMENT TO SOME AND ANGER TO OTHERS; BUT I HAVE TRIED TO BE IMPARTIAL AND STATE THE FACTS CONCERNING PUBLIC MEN AND GREAT EVENTS.

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TO
MY WIFE,
WITHOUT WHOSE HELP AND COMRADESHIP
I SHOULD HAVE LITTLE TO RECORD.

THE author wishes to acknowledge the assistance given by Mr. F. S. Stuart in assembling numerous records and material from which this book has been written.

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

I have little cause to complain of the reception given to Volume I, but a reviewer who failed to give his readers an idea of what the book was about stated that I had written a mixture of narrative and propaganda. To some extent this is true. How could I narrate something of the life experiences of Clynes and leave out propaganda?

I expressly stated that I was not writing official history, but there would be found in my chapters many historical glimpses of great movements and of the men who made them.

In this volume I have devoted many pages to the effects of the Great War and to the present preparations for defence against the rising risks of an attack upon this country. I write the story of the only General Strike there has been in our Industrial history, and of the vindictive and partisan law passed against the Trade Unions when it was over.

I tell something of the life of two Labour Governments, and of the great misfortune, to us, of the electoral success which caused Labour in 1929 to form the second Government on the approach of Industrial and economic collapse.

I tell the truth about the events in the autumn of 1931, when a National Government was formed, and an election was won and lost by the use of the most scandalous scare in political history.

J. R. C.

November, 1937.

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The first Labour Government in British history was brought to office in January, 1924, not because it had secured an election majority sufficient to give it power, but because Mr. Baldwin's Government was defeated on a Vote of Censure which I moved on January 17th. 1924

I have told, in the previous volume of my memoirs, how I watched British Labour change from a public laughing-stock to His Majesty's Opposition at Westminster. In my early days in politics Labour supporters were derided as cranks. A crank is a little thing that makes revolutions. We were not cranks, and we staved off a British revolution by giving British workmen a hand in the legislation by which their lives were ruled. In January, 1924, voicing the feelings of millions of my countrymen, I challenged Tory rule and, for the first time, it collapsed before Labour's claims.

My motion stated that " The present advisers of His Majesty have not the confidence of this House."

In my speech I drew attention for the first time to a misstatement which is complacently inserted in nearly every King's Speech submitted to both Houses and read from the Throne in the House of Lords. I said :

> " The Speech begins : '*My relations with Foreign Powers continue to be friendly*.' Is that accurate ? I

> allege that it is not! And if we are not careful about anything else which appears in the Speech from the Throne, we ought to be careful about facts. What is the position with respect to Russia? Russia is a great foreign power. Are our relations friendly with that foreign power? If we are on terms of friendship with Russia, how is it that we have not yet received her representatives, as we long ago properly received the representatives of Germany? Is it because Russia has not undertaken to pay her debts? If this is to be a bar to recognition, how is it that we have the representatives of France here?"

After three days of furious debating, my motion was carried by 328 votes to 256, and the Government resigned. King George V sent for Mr. MacDonald. Henderson, Thomas and myself were consulted by our leader, and I have told in my previous volume of our interview amid the gold and crimson magnificence of Buckingham Palace.

Though Labour could only form a minority Government, the King named MacDonald Prime Minister, making possible the first Socialist Government in our history out of the Working Men's Party, which had been a joke for so long. I was proud of British Labour that day!

When His late Majesty was asked how he regarded the change, he replied: "My grandfather would have hated it; my father could hardly have tolerated it; but I march with the times."

1924 When the Cabinet posts came to be allotted, I was appointed Lord Privy Seal, and was asked to accept general duties and act as Deputy Leader of the House of Commons.

I went to my predecessor in the ancient office, Lord Cecil, whom I had often met previously, and asked him for a little information. I imagined that there would be at least a few ceremonial duties connected with this old-time post.

"Can you tell me, Cecil," I asked, "exactly what my official duties will be as Lord Privy Seal?"

"None whatever," he replied with a smile, "except the pleasant one of signing a receipt once a month for your salary."

I found later that he was perfectly correct in this surprising statement. But if the post of Lord Privy Seal was a sinecure, I had before me very considerable duties and obligations as Deputy Leader of the House.

MacDonald, the Prime Minister, was also Foreign Secretary. This meant that he would have to be away from the House, and even out of the country, for long periods, when the whole weight of leadership of the Government, with its attendant consultations, would devolve upon me. This meant about fifteen hours' work per day; and this work unpaid. The nominal position of Lord Privy Seal exists to-day to meet just such an emergency.

Certain problems arose when MacDonald and the rest 1924
of us discussed the filling of the various vacant Cabinet posts. Not the least of them was that none of us knew offhand all the positions that had to be filled to form a complete Government. After having decided upon the principal Ministers, we had to consult a *Whitaker's Almanack* before we were able to list the many Under Secretaries and minor officials which custom decreed had to be appointed.

I was assured that, as Lord Privy Seal, it was now my duty to "take precedence before all dukes of the United Kingdom." I had no idea, at the time, of the way in which this privilege would be exercised; but I trusted that I should be instructed by the Lord Chamberlain or some proper officer when the time came.

My first activity as a member of the new Labour Government was to go with the rest of the members of the Cabinet to Windsor, where King George was staying, as he was indisposed, and receive the ancient seal of my office.

The King handed it to me in a leather case of a size which would about enclose an ordinary telephone instrument. His Majesty made one or two pleasant remarks. During the conversation I commented on the worn and aged appearance of the case enclosing the seal—I said that it looked almost as old as the historic Royal seal itself.

After leaving Windsor, I took the seal and put it into the safe at the Lord Privy Seal's office. Being in reality a formal private seal of the Sovereign, it is never actually used ; and I did not see it again until, at the end of my term of office, I had to get it out and hand it back to King George.

Then I discovered that the seal was enclosed in a clean new leather case.

It was typical of George V that he had not forgotten my idle words at our talk, and had gone to the trouble of having the case renewed.

1924 After some discussions, the list of names for the first British Labour Cabinet was completed. It was not easy to choose, as only two of us had ever sat in a Cabinet before. Our new Prime Minister and many of his principal lieutenants had never previously had any departmental experience. One of the most difficult posts to fill was that of First Lord of the Admiralty. It was finally accepted by Lord Chelmsford, though he was a non-party man, "in order that the Government might carry on."

The 1924 Cabinet consisted of the following members :

Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs : Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald.
Lord President of the Council : Rt. Hon. Lord Parmoor.
Chancellor of the Exchequer : Rt. Hon. Philip Snowden.
Lord Privy Seal and Deputy Leader of the House of Commons: Rt. Hon. J. R. Clynes.
Lord High Chancellor : Rt. Hon. Lord Haldane.
Secretary of State for Home Affairs : Rt. Hon. Arthur Henderson.
Secretary of State for War : Rt. Hon. Stephen Walsh.
Secretary of State for the Colonies : Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas.

Secretary of State for India : Rt. Hon. Lord Olivier.
Secretary of State for Air : Rt. Hon. Lord Thomson.
Secretary of State for Scotland : Rt. Hon. W. Adamson.
Minister of Health : Rt. Hon. John Wheatley.
First Lord of the Admiralty : Rt. Hon. Lord Chelmsford.
President of the Board of Trade : Rt. Hon. Sidney Webb.
President of the Board of Education : Rt. Hon. C. Trevelyan.
Minister of Labour : Rt. Hon. Thomas Shaw.
Minister of Agriculture : Rt. Hon. Noel Buxton.
First Commissioner of Works : Rt. Hon. F. W. Jowett.

There was some comment on our choice for various posts, and an amusing cartoon appeared in the *Daily Graphic* showing little Stephen Walsh, in all the panoply of war, being announced while passing under the arm of a gigantic footman as he entered a Cabinet meeting at No. 10. As a fact, Walsh was one of the most peaceful, and most able, War Ministers I have known in my political career. He was certainly more useful to the country than some of the sabre-rattling blusterers who have been at the War Office both before and since. A bulldog is a most inoffensive animal ; yet when occasion arises it can be infinitely more formidable than a dressed-up Peke which yaps at everybody's heels.

In my own new office as Lord Privy Seal, I found that 1924 I was expected to live next door to the Prime Minister, so that I could be always at hand to discuss policy or the business of the House. This was the more necessary because I should be expected from time to time to lead for the Government in the Commons.

A secret door connects No. 11 Downing Street with No. 10, so that Ministers may pass unobserved between the two houses on occasions when, perhaps, crowds block the street outside waiting for news at a time of national emergency.

I remember, when Mrs. Clynes and I went to look over our new official residence at No. 11, her first remark to me was that the great rambling house contained no piano and no sewing-machine.

It was very unlike our idea of a home, but we soon altered that.

When we moved in we discovered one or two other drawbacks. The principal reception-room, for instance which is set aside for official gatherings held by the Lord Privy Seal, and is, indeed, a spacious and handsome apartment, unfortunately had such a weak floor that in times of festivity it became positively dangerous.

Unless special precautions were taken it might have precipitated collections of important guests into the kitchens beneath, at the height of a ceremonial reception. That would hardly have been in keeping with the traditions of diplomatic hospitality. Therefore, special props were made to support the floor from beneath, to enable it to carry the extra weight of additional furniture and guests at big functions.

Much has been written about the difficulties met by Labour's first Cabinet Ministers in overcoming their lack of experience in the work of running the country, and in performing the highest social and political duties without the aid of public-school polish.

1924 That problems arose was, of course, inevitable. For my own part, I was sometimes at a loss in matters such as the precedence of foreign ambassadors, and similar niceties of political etiquette and usage. But the various permanent officials were helpful, and Labour's Ministers, unlike certain of their Party opponents, were never ashamed to learn.

More serious difficulties arose because our new positions sometimes entailed duties that were not pleasant to us, as representatives of British Labour thought.

Many of us, for instance, held the opinion that the wearing of old-fashioned Court dress might have been an excellent thing in the leisurely days when kings granted tailoring monopolies to their favourites, but that it wasted time and served no useful purpose in modern political life.

The Prime Minister indicated, when we took office,

MRS. CLYNES WITH HER SONS PREPARING A MICROPHONE IN THE PRINCIPAL RECEPTION ROOM AT NO. 11 DOWNING STREET

that Court dress would be necessary on certain occasions. We learned later that we might just as well have decided that it was not essential at all.

Indeed, at King George's own suggestion the rules about Court dress were relaxed in our favour—a gracious gesture which we very much appreciated.

At the time of our succession to power most of the Cabinet disliked MacDonald's views on this matter. But he was our leader, and our first days of office were hardly a suitable time in which to open a disagreement among ourselves. We drifted into acquiescence because none of us realised at the time that strong feeling would arise in the Party concerning our ceremonial attire.

Personally, I found the waste of time caused by dressing and undressing distinctly annoying on a few occasions. Morning dress for one function, afternoon dress with plumes and sword to consort with some arriving prince, and evening dress for a banquet, was all very well and picturesque; but in the intervals between changing our clothes, very little departmental work was possible. 1924

It seemed to me, also, very incongruous that men who had led only a civilian life should suddenly assume the peacock gauds of civilisation's professional officers, though having no connection whatever with the Army, Navy or Civil Service.

Our objection to our antiquated style of attire was simply that it was not appropriate and that it caused us to neglect the duties the country was paying us to perform. The Tory gibes of the time to the effect that we, with our lack of peculiar social inanities, felt incongruous in our uniforms, were simply the envious criticisms of persons who had wanted to fill those clothes themselves.

I have seen an ex-docker and ex-policeman Labour members of Parliament turned into correctly dressed officials at Buckingham Palace, looking very much more distinguished and perfect in their bearing than certain immature noblemen sent to Court from very wealthy households !

When I was present at the principal Jubilee banquet at Buckingham Palace in 1935, I noticed that the Ambassador of the United States, where gorgeous clothing is not accepted as a criterion of importance, attended wearing ordinary evening dress with knee-breeches.

I felt then, as I felt in 1924, that apparel considered imposing enough for the representative of our greatest neighbour should surely be good enough for a Labour Cabinet Minister.

1924 We had not been in office many days, and Parliament had not yet assembled, before the first murmurs arose concerning our official Ministerial salaries. Tories gibed at us for accepting these salaries, though they had drawn them for many years quite uncomplainingly. A motion for a reduction was very soon placed before the House and, being treated by us as a Vote of Confidence, only failed by a few votes to bring down the Government.

Even to-day, many of our own supporters do not realise that a tenant in Downing Street does not live in a free house run entirely at public expense. The rent is about the only thing that the occupant of No. 10 or No. 11 does *not* pay ! And even this is no great benefit, since he has still to pay the costs of his own dwelling elsewhere, or else sell it at a moment's notice and risk having to buy another equally quickly later on.

Because of the many functions necessary to his official position, a leading Cabinet Minister is almost obliged to occupy a cumbrous and uncomfortable house, such as No. 11 Downing Street, with its attendant frightening expenses.

While I was there it was impossible to keep the place clean and tidy without a staff of eight or nine servants. Communists often jeer at such statements ; but even they would find it a little difficult to conduct successful diplomacy with Britain's distinguished visitors in a kitchen-living-room, while feeding them on sausage and mash.

The wages bill and maintenance of the essential staff at No. 11 amounted to something close upon £2,000 a year, which I had to pay.

Nor were other items less startling. After being in residence for a few weeks, I received from a fellow Cabinet Minister, the First Commissioner of Works, a bill for £68 16s. 10d. on account of fuel, electricity and heating. My household's monthly bill for meat, fish, milk and a few groceries exceeded £67.

One official reception on which I tried to economise cost me only 2s. a head for visitors' refreshments. But the total bill came to £24 !

At times, when I was commanded to attend Buckingham Palace, I would be told that in addition to a chauffeur a second man as footman was the custom. I had to pay his wages. 1924

I do not complain because my salary as Cabinet Minister was consumed in the maintenance of a Government office. But I think it unfair that Labour Ministers should be accused of feathering their own nests because they accepted salaries which, in many cases, hardly covered the expenses the country called upon them to pay for the privilege of conducting her affairs and trying, in doing so, to help working-class men and women to better laws and conditions.

£5,000 a year is not enough for Cabinet Ministers who have to live in Downing Street, and the increased salaries are justified. To be the first Labour Minister to reside at No. 11 was to share in an historic event. But I would not go there again.

No. 10 and No. 11 Downing Street draw from all parts of the country thousands of interested visitors, who approached them as a political shrine. Quite often the pilgrims exhibit unconcealed disappointment when they stand outside and stare at the buildings where British history has been written. Many of them will hardly believe that a real live Prime Minister would consent to be hidden away behind such a drab façade.

I prize a comment which I overheard one day as I was passing out of No. 11 on my way to the House. A group of Lancashire folk stood gazing at the door, and I spoke to them as I went by.

" Not much to look at, is it ? " I said.

" No," was the quick retort, " but there's gradely stuff goes into 'um ! "

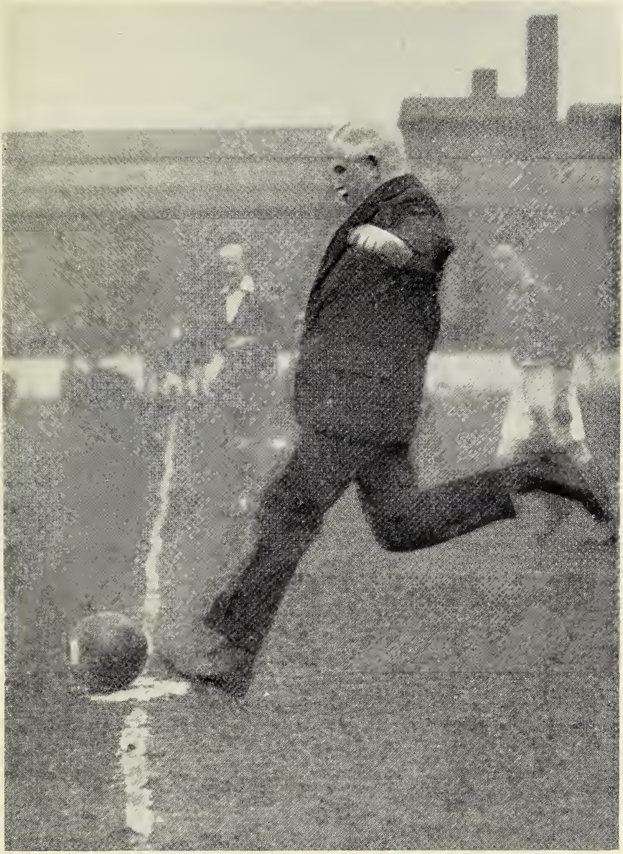
1924 When I went to No. 11 I had to buy a lot of extra furniture, useless to me elsewhere, and quantities of glass, cutlery and utensils requisite to the hospitality I was expected to extend there. At times of political entertainments I had to pay all the expenses of extra staffs, even to the fees for attendance in the cloak-rooms. The cloak-rooms, incidentally, were offices temporarily transformed for the purpose.

Some time before there was the slightest thought of Labour ever going to Downing Street, I sat with a few leading Members of the House of Commons on a committee to inquire into Ministerial expenses.

We examined proofs of the heavy charges which have to be met from Cabinet incomes, and found that the salaries paid to certain principal members of the Government are actually not enough to meet such expenses. Thus these men are not merely working for nothing, but are out of pocket after a period of office.

£5,000 a year, reduced nowadays by income-tax to about £3,500, is not enough for a minister forced to live in Downing Street ; and after my investigations on the committee, I signed a report in favour of raising the salary of the Prime Minister to £8,000 a year.

Some months ago, this question of salaries came before the Commons, and considerable increases were made in certain Ministerial salaries, including that of the Prime Minister. As I say, I was in full agreement with any such measure, after my own experience of Downing Street expenses. But it was rather amusing to watch the very Members who had gibed at Labour for accepting the old scale of salaries ; now that their own Party was in Downing Street, they were avid to increase



E. Hulton & Co.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL KICKING-OFF AT A MANCHESTER CUP-TIE IN 1924

those amounts which they thought too great for Labour Ministers to accept.

In former days, certain ex-Cabinet Ministers who claimed that their income after retiring from Downing Street was insufficient to keep them, were granted pensions of between £1,200 and £2,000 a year. No Labour man ever drew any such pension.

These somewhat unfair pensions were abolished in April, 1924; but recently a pension of £2,000 a year has been granted to ex-Prime Ministers and a like sum as salary for the Leader of the Opposition.

I do not propose in this chapter to deal with the work of the first Labour Government, in its wider sense. But a few personal memories come back to me, some of which were amusing at the time.

As Lord Privy Seal, I had a good number of ceremonial duties to perform, many of which, in my opinion, could have been deputed to someone not in the Cabinet, whose position was more spectacular and less busy than mine. 1924

In the early summer of 1924, a number of royal persons arrived from abroad to visit King George and Queen Mary, and attend the birthday celebrations at Buckingham Palace. It was my duty to attend certain banquets at which the King and Queen of Italy and their son and daughter were present; and later to attend a Palace banquet to welcome the King and Queen of Roumania.

At the end of the latter entertainment, the double doors of the great banqueting-hall of Buckingham Palace were flung wide, and a procession of twenty-four sturdy Scottish pipers, tartans swinging and pipes askirl, marched in and circled twice round the hall.

At their entrance, the King of Roumania half-rose in his seat and looked a little alarmed. The music and the wild dress of the clansmen was something entirely new to him.

On inquiry, I was told that the pipers' march was suggested by King George V himself early in his reign, and that it has often caused astonishment and occasionally a measure of uneasiness in the minds of foreign royal guests unacquainted with the Highland welcome.

1924 A few weeks later, the Emperor of Abyssinia visited the Palace, and was entertained to a banquet in Downing Street.

He and his staff of about a dozen black noblemen arrived wearing long and magnificent cloaks, which gave an exotic touch of colour to our grey political headquarters. The effect of the cloaks was somewhat spoiled, however, by the fact that, out of compliment to the customs of the country, the Emperor and his gentlemen had all equipped themselves with rather ill-fitting billycock hats!

Of these hats they were inordinately proud. They refused to give them up to the attendants, and carried their headgear solemnly before them into the banquet-chamber, very carefully storing them beneath their chairs while the meal was in progress, and often glancing nervously down to see that they had not been stolen by envious persons during the soup or fish courses.

Few of them spoke any European tongue, so that nearly all our conversation had to be carried on in dumb show.

The Tories have often made fun of us on the ground of our lack of languages, yet I think few of them would have shown greater ingenuity in inventing an impromptu language of signs than did Lord Haldane and others of the Labour leaders present at that amusing banquet.

It is a sad reflection that the Emperor of Abyssinia, then Britain's honoured guest, is now a fugitive driven by foreign force from his country, which we and other Members of the League of Nations had solemnly pledged our honour to protect.

A much less formal ceremony which I attended once or twice during my period as Lord Privy Seal was that of kicking off in big football matches and cup-ties for Manchester teams. I have always had an interest in Manchester football, and one of my earliest political memories is kicking off, in 1906, for Manchester United, during my first General Election campaign.

Manchester won the match, and I won my election, though we were both tipped to lose. I cannot remember the outcome of the game I kicked off in 1924, but I do recall that it was an extremely cold day, and that I envied the players who ran about and got thoroughly warmed up, while I hovered shivering on the touch-line to await the result of the match. 1924

Chapter II

1924—British Labour hopes and fears—The Capital Levy explained —Only owners of more than £5,000 affected—Baldwin approves the Levy—No disturbance of capital—Nationalisation of industries—Nationalised industries that pay a profit—Checking gross profiteering—£1,000,000 a day wasted—Nationalising the land—Labour peace ideals—Pioneers travel slowly.

When British Labour took office for the first time since Parliament was founded, the country was divided roughly into two camps.

Labour supporters in the main expected that we should bring about the millennium within a few months. Our extremists had promised a number of impossible things ; and there seemed to be an opinion that, with Labour in power, unemployment would immediately vanish, poverty would cease, opportunity and wealth would be suddenly equalised, and peace and happiness descend upon the United Kingdom.

A still more fantastic view was held by vast numbers of Conservative and Liberal voters throughout the 1924 country. These people talked of financial collapse, the withdrawal of foreign capital from Britain, international tangles followed by wars, and the disintegration of the British Empire.

Even to-day, there are thousands of people of education and intelligence who see in Labour a Red Bogy Man trailing ruin and death. Fiery old colonels will tell you that " Labour wants to rob the banks, damme sir ! " ; while innocent elderly ladies bridle and hint darkly at " atheism and communal marriage like those dreadful Russians ! " British Labour has no more to do with Russia than with Turkey or Siam, but the legend remains.

1924

I propose, therefore, to devote this chapter to an outline of some ambitions of Labour, as they were when we took office in 1924, and as they are, with very slight modifications to suit changing world conditions, to this day.

Let me tell you exactly what is behind those scarecrow figures of Capital Levy, Nationalisation and Peace, which our political opponents have seized and decked out in ghastly rags so as to terrify needy voters away from a carefully fenced land flowing with milk and honey.

And, before I start, let me say that these are not mere matters of theory. They will be put into practice by a Labour Government of the future, as inevitably as women's suffrage, once a derided theory, was brought about in the past. We may have to wait many years before the country understands and supports our programme ; but as surely as the sun will rise to-morow, so surely will Nationalisation, Peace and a Capital Levy become accepted parts of British national life in the England of the future.

I have been in politics for over forty years, and what I prophesy is the logical and certain outcome of what I have seen happen.

The Capital Levy would be a tax which would affect no one save those who possessed property worth more than £5,000. Above that figure, a man whose wealth did not exceed £6,000 would pay £50 ; £8,000, £250 ; £10,000, £550 ; and so on in an ascending scale till a man who owned ten million pounds' worth of property would pay about 50 per cent of his holdings.

There would be one payment only ; the Levy would not be an annual or periodical affair.

Certain Tory extremists have deliberately and persistently fogged the issue of a Capital Levy, stating that it would be an annual tax, that it would be extorted by robbery, that it would ruin trade, and so on. These are not even clever lies, and should be nailed up like dead vermin.

Earl Baldwin himself, much to the confusion of some of his die-hard followers, has made a perfectly fair statement of the case. He said, some years ago :

> " It is no good meeting propaganda about a Capital Levy by merely saying it is a form of robbery, for two reasons : first, it would not be true ; and secondly, nobody would believe you when you said it. Capital Levy is a perfectly legitimate form of taxation, because all taxation partakes of the nature of a Capital Levy."

The reason why Labour wants a Capital Levy is to wipe out the war debts of this country. By collecting the levy carefully over a period of years, a sum of about five thousand million pounds could be collected, to pay off most of the remaining costs of the 1914–18 struggle. That gigantic monument to martial ineptitude and political folly cost us a price whose remnant still hangs like a millstone about the neck of this nation.

During the last war, a compulsory levy was enforced on human life. Men who hated war and did not want to go to France were sundered from their wives and children, flung into khaki, and sent out to die amid poison and high explosive in the mud of the Western Front. Agony and sorrow beyond conception was caused at the arbitrary command of stupid generals and politicians who sought self-fame.

The greatest profiteers in money were kept safely at home, making war-time needs. Many became millionaires ; yet now, when Labour suggests conscripting, not their lives, but their surplus wealth, they whine as those who died in France never whined. In every war, working men are conscripted and taken out to die ; it is only just that when the time comes to pay for such wars, those who grew rich at home should be asked to foot the bill, and conscripted to do so when need arises.

It has been said that panic and business dislocation would be caused in the business world by the introduction
1924 of a Capital Levy. The same terrors were promised when

a Labour Government came into power; but they were simply empty fears. 1924

Most of the Levy would not be paid in cash, but by a mere transfer of securities to the Government. No disturbance to work need be caused by the acquirement of a number of pieces of paper by the nation.

During the War, hundreds of millions of pounds were handed over to the Government, in a similar manner, in the form of War Loan. This did not shake the foundations of finance. Nor would the Capital Levy.

At this moment, the Government is arranging to borrow hundreds of millions to spend on preparations for further wars, bombing and destruction. As a result, finance is livelier than ever, and prosperity is greater in Britain.

How much more prosperity would there be if, instead of engaging the nation's credit to pay interest on these loans, the Government was obtaining the money in order to wipe out the staggering war debts under which we already stumble.

Persons liable to pay the Capital Levy would have to declare the value of their possessions. It has been said that this is impossible. Why so? Precisely the same valuations are being made every day for death duties.

The capital could be gathered in by existing revenue staffs.

The difference between a Capital Levy and the present taxation is simply one of period and class. The money to meet our debts must be found. It can only come from where it is. But, under present conditions, it is being extorted largely from the pockets of poor and middle-class people, who cannot afford it. It could come far more easily and far more justly from the money-bags of those who hitherto have been allowed to grow vastly rich behind the protection of political hucksters at Westminster, who do not fail themselves to profit for the defence they offer to the great profiteers.

Of our population of 40,000,000 people, only about 3,000,000 are wealthy enough to pay any income-tax whatever, and slightly over 100,000 pay super-tax. There are about 600,000 people whose income exceeds £500 a year ; about 25,000 get more than £5,000 a year ; only about 150 draw over £100,000 a year.

Incomes can never be standardised while human nature remains. But a Capital Levy, and other Labour legislation, will one day make it possible at least to ensure that no one suffers actual want, no one starves or goes about in thin and threadbare clothes, while others—even only 150 others—draw an income of over £100,000 a year.

It is difficult to remember all these facts and figures. But, when next you hear the Capital Levy spoken of, I would ask you to recall two simple details ; that it is not a seizure of cash, and that it affects no one whose possessions are worth less than £5,000.

1924 Another ideal held by the Labour Party in 1924, and held just as tenaciously to-day, is that of the nationalisation of our principal industries.

Those capitalists who have pursued their claims for private wealth without regard to the human needs of the masses of the workers, have always fiercely opposed all ideas of Nationalisation. But already the ground is shifting under their feet ; and unless they cease to oppose the inevitable, they will be broken and swept away into the abyss where their spiritual and often lineal ancestors, the robber barons, have already disappeared.

The Labour Party's chief feeling now, in the matter of Nationalisation, is not that it is impossible, but that our political opponents will suddenly adopt the idea as a brand new one of their own devising, just before some General Election when they need a vote-catching programme.

They have done such things before ; the League of Nations and Women's Suffrage are two cases in point.

It is obviously absurd to say that industries cannot be nationalised, or cannot be run nationally on a profitable basis. The Post Office, the B.B.C. in large part and other great businesses are already the property of the nation, and make gigantic profits every year. Electricity and coal must follow within a few years, and land and railways very shortly afterwards.

During the War I became Food Controller at the head of a gigantic experiment whereby the feeding of forty millions of our people was nationalised. Conditions for this new departure could not have been worse. The submarine campaign, the upset of war-time conditions, the dislocation of our maritime carrying traffic, and the possession by Germany of the two greatest granaries in the world, made national feeding a nightmare task.

Yet we did our mammoth shop-keeping successfully, and made some millions of pounds profit for the nation. Nor did the food trade suffer.

In addition to the undustries I have mentioned, the banks, armaments, lighting and heating, water supplies, fishing, and many other extensive businesses will soon be taken from private control in Britain.

It is high time! In various parts of my daily newspaper I see that bread prices are being forced up to the highest level for ten years, and will go higher yet; that sugar prices are rising because sugar is being cornered by armaments firms for transforming into high explosive; and that there is gross profiteering in glycerine, so that medical supplies are running short while the armaments firms have an excess.

I have before me a reliable list of average costs of aircraft built, in the first case for civil sale, and in the second case by armaments firms for sale to the nation. Unprincipled profiteering has certainly been carried out by certain armaments firms during the last two years, and this list is significant:

CIVIL		MILITARY	
Single-seat racer	£2,000	Single-seat fighter	£10,000
Two-seat tourer	£2,000	Two-seat fighter	£12,000
Light air-liner	£6,000	Light twin bomber	£15,000
Big liner	£24,000	Heavy bomber	£30,000

A lot of self-satisfied remarks have been made about the Government costing system keeping a check on the profits of armaments. Under this system, the manufacturer is entitled to a 10 per cent profit over costs agreed upon by the costing department.

It is therefore clearly to the armaments firm's interests to make everything cost as much as possible. The more money that is wasted in buying expensive ingredients and components, the higher the cost of the product sold to the nation—and the higher the 10 per cent profit. To take an example from the aircraft whose prices I have quoted, if a military light bomber cost only £6,000, like its civil equivalent, the profit would be £600 ; but when it costs £15,000, as it does, the profit is nearly three times as much.

And yet there are sober citizens who say that it would not be an economy to us all if armaments firms and other great industries were immediately nationalised !

The change-over from private to national ownership of industries will be gradual, and it will not take the 1924 form of daylight robbery, as the opponents of Labour always hysterically insist. Proper compensation will be made, and a costly and tedious affair it will be. But it will be done in the end.

Fifty years from now, it will be as unthinkable for our great industries to be used for private pocket-filling as it would be now if the prices of main water supplies, drainage and stamps went soaring upwards every time it was supposed that the public had a little extra money to spend.

It has been said that industries could not be purchased by the nation without crippling taxation. This is incorrect. The purchase-money would be made over to the present owners in the form of a proportion of the annual profits for a number of years after the concerns changed hands.

British trade is now being taxed to the tune of roughly one million pounds every twenty-four hours, to pay for the last war. If this could be eliminated by a Capital

Levy, and our bigger industries could then be nationalised, what a splendid era of prosperity and happiness would dawn !

To mention only a few immediate results, income-tax would be reduced to about 2s. in the £, taxes on beer, tea, sugar, tobacco, petrol and so on would probably vanish altogether, and food, clothes and all sorts of necessaries and luxuries would immediately become much cheaper.

The nationalisation of land in Britain will probably cause considerable outcry when it comes about. Yet it is perhaps the most obvious of all our national needs.

1924 No sane person can defend the view that former invaders (they came over with the Conqueror !), warriors, rulers, kings' mistresses and favourites, had the right to apportion in perpetuity the surface of Great Britain, or any other country.

For every person in the position of landowner to-day, there are two thousand who do not possess an inch of land. Yet, when that land is threatened by a foreign invader, those who own none of it are expected and forced to give their lives to defend it, that it may remain in the private grasp of the descendants of former foreign invaders.

All land should belong to the nation ; and I think it probable that even within our lifetime we shall see the passing of legislation which will transfer the ownership of the land of this country to its people.

This need not disturb the present owners, or cause them any loss in regard to stately houses or valuable factories they may have built upon it. The change will be effected simply by handing over certain pieces of paper.

The only difference it will make will be that all landowners will be required to pay a Government annual rental. Those owning only a small freehold in the suburbs, or an acre or two in the country, will pay but a shilling or two a year. But the proud possessors of feudal estates will be taxed on a rising scale, so that if they insist on keeping hundreds of acres of rich land barren and idle, simply to hunt over it or boast of it, at least they will be obliged to pay some of its value to the poorer people who cannot afford even a back garden, and have to make a pathetic window-box satisfy their cravings for the green and beautiful spaces of the earth.

Without land man cannot exist. The food he eats, the clothes he wears, the materials from which his habitations are built, and those very habitations themselves are all constructed from or stand upon the universal provider and workshop of nature.

It is obvious, therefore, that all men have a right to use the earth for their support. That right is not the jealous privilege of a few whose ancestors gained tracts of land, usually by means which would not be tolerated to-day.

Land, mines, fisheries, reservoirs, rivers, forests, docks, harbours—these things should not belong to landlords, but should be owned by the nation under whose protection they exist. The man who merely draws an income from such places is worse than a drone bee in a hive ; he does no work though he is a burden on those who do.

Not the least offender in this direction is the Church—one of the biggest landlords in the country. Before long, all landlords will be obliged by law to render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, and pay into the Exchequer of the State money now used for private or sectarian purposes.

Not until every foot of British land is owned by the country, and leased to those who wish to retain or obtain it, will Labour's ambitions be satisfied. It was one of our ideals in 1924 to effect such a change in possession, but circumstances prevented us, as I shall show later. 1924

A different ideal, in which we did succeed in making considerable progress, was that of reducing armaments.

When one realises that of every shilling a man now pays in taxation, tenpence goes to pay for past or future wars, it is glaringly obvious that some such reduction as we planned is urgently needed.

Housing, education, employment, health—these and many other vital national services are emaciated because Mars grows so lusty under our tender nurturing of him. The God of War is the cuckoo in our national nest.

In the last few years, Britain has flagrantly decided to cease all efforts at armaments reduction. The forges have been glowing, the chimneys belching, and the pockets of the arms profiteers clinking. But British Labour, which began effective opposition to war-mongering in its term of office in 1924, and did in fact considerably reduce British fighting forces while other countries reduced theirs, has always steadily opposed the policy of beating our ploughshares into swords. 1924

The desire for private profit is at the root of it, and we oppose the idea of private profit being made from men's broken bodies and the gassed corpses of women and babies.

I have outlined briefly some of the ideals held by the Labour Party in 1924, when it found itself on the threshold of power. As we allotted the Cabinet posts during those cold winter days after the fall of the Tory Government, there were many of us who felt that the night of injustice and poverty and hunger was passing, and that a golden dawn of prosperity was breaking for Britain.

Others among us who had been in office before, and who saw only too clearly the gathering clouds of depression that were the aftermath of the War, realised that we should be able to do only a little in that first term of office, and perhaps not very much for a further twenty-five years.

But we who had seen Labour votes grow from a few hundreds to many millions knew that the greater things we dreamed of could not be for ever delayed. Some of our leaders of that day have died since with visions unfulfilled, and others, too, must die without even a glimpse of the Promised Land. But we will go on steadfastly marching through the wilderness of greed and fear and doubt ; so long as the Standard we have been carrying since 1850 reaches its goal at the last, what matter those who fall on the way.

In 1924 Labour suffered a setback because a number of our supporters expected us to do everything in a few weeks, and abused us bitterly when they found that we could not perform miracles.

1924 I suffered like the rest, but we bore it. I have become accustomed to the revilings of those whose part in reconstruction and reform is just to keep on shouting complaints. As a Government, we did what we could, and substantially forwarded the claims of those who continued to trust us. We were still only pioneers, though more advanced than in the latter years of the last century when some of us had begun our political service.

Pioneers travel slowly ; and it takes more than a few weeks or months in office to alter the social evils that have been built up during many centuries.

I have told you something of our ideals when we took office in 1924. Now I will tell you what we actually accomplished.

Chapter III

1924—Political difficulties—Work as Deputy Leader of the Government—Mr. Bernard Shaw refuses an honour—How honours lists are made out—Costs of honours—The MacDonald motor car affair—How Cabinets work—Tales of "No. 10"—Labour lightens taxation—Why we renewed Russian relations—Tackling German reparations—Starting international disarmament—King George and Wembley—Labour and Imperialism—Settling strikes.

Had we been able to choose our time for Labour's first period of office, we should never have begun our work as a government in 1924.

World conditions were extremely bad, and Britain was in a worse state than she had been since 1914. The Liberals and Conservatives made a howling mess of the War, plunged into wild and stupid speculations during the early years of peace—and then stepped politely aside, bowed courteously, and waited for Labour to clear up the nastiest political muddle of the century.

Both Parties made it clear that they hoped Labour would fail, and so the political menace of the new movement would explode like a pricked bubble.

We were faced with a position unique in Parliamentary 1924 history. We, the Government, were heavily outnumbered by the Opposition. We were outnumbered even by the Tories alone. So long as we toed the line drawn by Asquith and Lloyd George, we might hope to remain in office. Yet even before Parliament opened, our extremists were clamouring for the moon.

The unemployment problem was worse than it had ever been. For the first time, we had nearly two million people out of work. Wages were cut in many great industries, but food costs were actually rising. Never had there been such a house-shortage as then existed, for nothing had been done to solve the problem since the War, or during the four years of the struggle itself. Meanwhile, the vast armies of Britain had been demobilised and come back, asking nothing so eagerly as homes of their own.

MacDonald, in his position as Foreign Secretary, had his own troubles ahead. Crises were looming in India, Turkey, Egypt and Iraq. Russia had been sent to Coventry, and was bitterly resentful. France was defying her Allies and enemies alike by keeping her coloured troops in possession of the German Ruhr industrial belt. These matters provided our leader with just about all he could tackle.

This meant that I was left very largely in charge of the Party in the House of Commons. It was not an easy job.

1924 I was wanted by many Government Departments, in a consultative way. I had to discuss affairs and guide them on various duties, and link up the heads of the national political services to work for the common objects set out in Labour policy.

I suggested Bills, and supported many of them in the Commons. I had constantly to express the Government views on critical questions of the hour.

In MacDonald's frequent absences, I was the chief " Aunt Sally " of the Government. Tory and Liberal criticisms were hurled at me daily, and I had to be ready at all times to face the spear-point of attack from Baldwin, Lloyd George, Churchill, Asquith and their many able henchmen.

The position was not a pleasant one. I was responsible to an absent leader for the life of a " kept " Party to which Asquith could show the door at any moment.

I have often been criticised for what has been termed our timidity in 1924. What happened was that our work was crippled and our plans ruined by the fact that, at the first sign of uncompromising Labour views, the Liberals would have sided with the Tories and flung us ignominiously out of office.

As deputy Leader of the Government, I never ceased to be aware of the bitter restraints put upon us. Otherwise I should certainly have advised nationalisation of several industries, a Capital Levy, and other important national needs.

Away from the House, I found my difficulties no less. I had to keep in touch with the Ministries of Health, War and so on when MacDonald was away, and the work was exacting and responsible. I had to deal with huge quantities of documents, couched in semi-legal terms, and decide technical problems for a few departments. 1924

All the time I found the permanent officials extraordinarily helpful and kind. They were always beside me, advising, coaching and checking ; and in a short time I gained a measure of knowledge necessary in matters where, perhaps, national safety or the spending of millions of money was concerned.

The first few weeks of the new session were an anxious time for us all in the new Cabinet. There were grave debates concerning the foreign position, and the policy to be followed by MacDonald in his contacts with continental representatives. The question of German finance was fully discussed, for it was obvious that unless something was done quickly, the German banks would collapse, dragging down with them a great part of the trade of this and other countries.

Apart from all else, we had to reassure Britain that our advent was not going to herald a gigantic national collapse, as had been so freely prophesied by our opponents.

One of our earliest difficulties was that of finding suitable Labour spokesmen in the Lords. Lord Parmoor, Lord Haldane and Lord Chelmsford joined the Cabinet, and three other Labour men, Sidney Arnold, Sidney Olivier and C. B. Thomson, were made peers. None of the latter had heirs, so that no question of hereditary title was involved.

Surprise has been expressed from many different sources since that we did not take the opportunity to include the name of Mr. Bernard Shaw in an honours list, or ask him to act as our spokesman in the Upper House. It has been pointed out that his years of invaluable work as a propagandist of Labour thought, no less than his original and powerful contributions to literature, deserved some such recognition.

1924 The truth is that it was intimated to Mr. Shaw that if he wanted his name to be included, he had only to say so. This was in the course of a correspondence about a knighthood that he wanted for somebody else.

But he refused very emphatically on his own behalf. His own name, he said, was good enough for him ; and as he " refused under any consideration to waste his time in the House of Lords," he was not available for the work of representing us in that chamber.

So much has been said since on the subject of Labour and honours that I might perhaps explain a few facts as to how they are awarded. Labour opinions differ sharply as to titles, and whatever we had done, we should not have pleased all our supporters, much less our opponents !

The allocation of honours is arranged by a small impartial committee who weigh claims submitted by Ministers, departmental chiefs, ambassadors and other officials, and by various organisations. Great care is taken that no unworthy name passes this committee, and no divorced persons or bankrupts are included in the lists.

When titled people bring disgrace upon themselves, the culprits are nearly always those who have inherited titles, not those who have been selected to receive honours.

When it has been decided that the names in a list are suitable, and that their owners can afford distinction, the list is sent by the Prime Minister to the King, who may delete or add any names he chooses.

George V deleted about half a dozen names, and added some. At his personal request, Mr. Asquith was induced to accept a peerage, and Delius, the musician, became a Companion of Honour.

Many famous people refuse honours. Gladstone and T. P. O'Connor are two Parliamentary examples. Sydney Walton, my former private secretary and colleague at the Food Ministry, said, when offered a knighthood, that he preferred to serve his country for nothing.

John Galsworthy's name once appeared in an honours list, but the famous author wrote to the King explaining why he did not wish to accept a title, and, by royal permission, his name was withdrawn, though he later accepted an O.M.

Prominent figures in the House of Commons are often tempted with peerages—by their political opponents or Party rivals. In this way it is hoped to remove clever debaters or possible future leaders from the battle-ground of the Commons to the somnolent Hesperides of the Lords. 1924

To be offered such an honour must be sometimes very perplexing, for it might not be offered a second time!

The cry has often been raised that honours can be "bought" by substantial contributions to Party funds. That this was the case until a comparatively short time ago, there is no doubt, and many an unsuitable country squire found his way into the baronetcy or peerage by what was a financial manipulation.

It does not easily happen to-day largely because Labour is a watch-dog in the Commons with uncompromising views about honours in general.

However this may be, new dignities often carry heavy bills with them. Newly made peers have sometimes been startled to receive accounts from the Inland Revenue Department for £120 for stamp duties, £179 for Crown Fees and upwards of £30 for Home Office Fees.

After paying these amounts, the new peer must find a further £100 or so with which to buy his coat of arms, while his ceremonial robes and coronet may cost him at least as much again.

To become a Knight of the Garter is an even more expensive privilege. Before all the necessary accounts are paid, the recipient may find himself upwards of £1,000 out of pocket.

It will readily be seen that honours are not unmixed blessings, though fees have now been greatly reduced.

Apart from the cost in our case, many Labour supporters think that all hereditary titles should be abolished. I hold this view myself. It seems absurd that men and women should feel self-importance because of a lineage which they did nothing to assist.

None the less, the first persons to make bitter outcry against Labour acceptance of honours or other recognition are always those who have done nothing to earn their own titles. During Labour's first period in office, such an outcry arose and assumed almost national importance because of an innocent action by MacDonald when he was first Prime Minister.

1924 What really happened was this. A biscuit manufacturer who had been intimate with MacDonald's family for years learned that the Prime Minister's official salary did not, after other expenses were paid, permit him to keep a motor car. In fact, Britain's Premier often had to " strap-hang " on his way between his house in north London and his official residence in Downing Street.

His friend considered that the dignity of this country's political leader was not well preserved by such modes of travel, and also that a man who had worked hard at national affairs was tiring himself unnecessarily by standing in public conveyances after, perhaps, a fifteen-hour day in the public service.

He therefore generously presented MacDonald with a luxurious car, and also with a group of shares in his biscuit manufacturing company, so as to provide an income on which such a car could be run. Without the shares it would have been merely an added expense.

When, shortly afterwards, the donor's name appeared in an honours list, suggestions were openly made that Labour was selling titles for private or Party gain.

In actual fact, the donor had given considerable sums over a number of years towards the endowing of public libraries and other similar contributions towards the welfare of the very classes whose benefit the Labour Government had at heart.

That, and not anything to do with the celebrated "luxury car," was why an honour was awarded in this case.

During the first few months of the new Government 1924 I spent a good deal of time at No. 10 Downing Street, in consultation with the Prime Minister and others of my colleagues. I attended Cabinets, and presided over many of them in the absence of MacDonald abroad.

Contrary to the silly tales of the time, we were an orderly and busy organisation, and worked in perfect agreement throughout all our principal discussions.

The Cabinet room is fitted with double doors and sound-proof walls, to ensure secrecy at these meetings on which the fate of a country or an empire might hang. The room is about fifty feet long, and its chief furniture is a long table at which Ministers sit, and a great number of dull books on procedure and etiquette, which line the walls. Nobody ever reads them.

It is said that in the old days, when a "three-bottle man" was considered the best example of a true gentleman, the double doors were useful to prevent the knowledge reaching the country of drinking bouts in which Cabinet Ministers armed with their own bottles made some unpleasant scenes.

In my time in the Cabinet the only refreshment available was a jug of water on the sideboard.

I must admit that many Labour Ministers smoked a good deal during Cabinets, and sometimes, as the problems over which we puzzled grew more lucid, the air of the Cabinet room became thicker and thicker.

Curiously enough, No. 10 is strictly assigned to the First Lord of the Treasury, and not to the Prime Minister at all. But the two posts are now usually held by one man. The house was built by a Communist-turned-Royalist, born in Dublin, educated in America, and sent as Ambassador to Holland. His name carried such opprobrium that the expression—" A George Downing "—was used in England during his lifetime to express in non-libellous terms the utmost limits of treachery, avarice, servility and ingratitude!

Educated at Harvard, Downing came to England and, while acting as Scoutmaster-General to Oliver Cromwell's armies, urged Cromwell to make himself king. Simultaneously, he was secretly in touch with the exiled Charles II, trying to arrange the latter's restoration. When Charles came back to the throne, he gave Downing a valuable piece of land on which the able diplomatist built Downing Street, and tried to sell it at an extravagant price to the Government for State offices.

He did not succeed, but they gave him a baronetcy instead. He married for money, and was given the management of the State Treasury. Pepys wrote of him as " a perfidious rogue " ; he seems to have lined his own pockets with national moneys.

Fourteen Premiers, eleven Chancellors of the Exchequer, and six relatives or secretaries of former Prime Ministers, have resided at No. 10. Sir Robert Peel's secretary, himself a possible future Premier, was shot dead there by an assassin who was seeking to murder Peel.

The house contains about forty rooms connected by endless rambling staircases and twisty passages. It is said that Miss Ishbel MacDonald laid down some
1924 knitting in one of the rooms a day or two after first entering the place as her father's hostess in 1924, and could not find it again till the permanent officials were called in to help.

The house had no bathroom till Mr. Asquith went there in 1908. Now it has many, but guests sometimes find great difficulty in regaining their rooms after using one of them, owing to the labyrinth of passages. Recently there has been great structural improvements.

Whenever any event of national importance is to take place, crowds gather outside No. 10, to stare at the drab, brick-faced mansion, with its dingy iron railings. Recently, some of the gloomy interior has been very much brightened, but the secret, furtive air remains. The place might be the cold heart of a stone Machiavelli, depressing, inconvenient, out of date and dark. But, while British politics last, it will never pass away.

Before we had been in office many weeks, the time 1924 came for Labour's first Budget to be presented to the House of Commons. Some nervousness was felt in the country before it appeared, lest revolutionary financial changes were made. But, owing to our numerical weakness, the Budget was a timid affair. Income-tax and surtax were unaltered ; no mention was made of a Capital Levy ; but taxation cuts amounting to £30,000,000 were made in duties on everyday foods. Sugar duty was more than halved, tea duty was halved, and taxes on coffee, cocoa, fruit and other necessaries were lightened. Entertainment taxes were reduced, and the duty on cars and cinema films was abolished. In eight months we reduced food taxation as much as the Liberals had done in eight years.

Despite adverse criticisms of our actions, the British car industry did not suffer, and employment rose considerably as a result of the freeing of money to be spent in trade.

Very early in our administration we turned seriously to tackle the grave problems of British foreign relations. The vindictive and greedy terms of the Versailles Treaty had left Europe like an armed camp riddled by dissension and vengeful rage. Post-War interference and muddle, and the rise of hot-headed dictators, had made things steadily worse up to 1924.

In various endeavours, open and covert, to overthrow the Republic which Russia had chosen for its Government and to set up again the hated Romanov tryanny, Great Britain spent in material and money one hundred millions. Yet Russia is one of the biggest potential markets in the world for the goods we produce. We make the machinery they need and they grow the food and provide many articles which we require.

Until Labour took office Britain had refused to have
1924 any dealings with the Soviet. We altered that. Before we had been in power a fortnight, we accorded full recognition to the biggest country in Europe. A London Conference took place immediately afterwards, at which famous experts from Russia and Britain attended. At this Conference the Russians pointed out —what has never been properly understood here—that British interference in their civil wars, our blockade of their ports, and so on, had cost them the staggering total of four thousand million pounds. Their suggestion was that we cancelled all the Tsarist Russian debts to us in exchange for their cancellation of the damage we had thus done them since 1916.

The matter of debts was not finally settled when we went out of power ; and the Tories' first act was to humiliate Russia by once more breaking off relations with her, on a ridiculous excuse, despite the fact that such an action sent our unemployment figures, much reduced since the Labour agreement with Russia, soaring again.

But we obtained " most favoured nation " rights with Russia, and began an important peace agreement that may yet develop into far-reaching results. We changed Russia from a dangerous outcast threatening everyone's peace into a country once more pursuing diplomatic methods.

We tackled the problem of German reparations, and for the first time since the Armistice we placed the payments on a definite footing. Realising that no nation would willingly pay reparations while its soil was still oppressed by the foot of the invader, we arranged with France to withdraw her troops from the Ruhr. This great task was carried out without a single hostile demonstration, and with speed and orderliness.

The result was to stabilise financial conditions in Germany. The German currency had been inflated till it had to be put on a new basis ; this was supported by loans and agreements till it brought back confidence and a measure of international security once again.

In these negotiations we persuaded the United States to take part ; and there is little doubt that, had Labour continued in office, that great country might have been persuaded in the end to join the League of Nations, with a profound effect on the future of European peace.

We came to a proper understanding with France, after Bonar Law, Baldwin and Lloyd George had failed to do so, and laid the foundations of the present Anglo-French friendship which has done much to preserve the peace.

MacDonald made a memorable speech at Geneva, 1924 advocating armaments reductions and the settlement of future international quarrels by judicial means rather than by force. Hitherto, the League affairs had been relegated to underlings, many of whom put in appearances as if with their tongues in their cheeks. But Labour sent principals, and caused fifty nations to agree to defined reductions in arms. Except for our periods in office, this country has given no genuine support to the League since its inception ; the Conservative Party gives it much lip-service and nothing else save more or less covert contempt.

By reducing the threatening proportions of the British Army and Navy, we saved the taxpayer over £7,000,000 in eight months. More important still, we led the way for substantial foreign reductions in ships and fighting men.

While this international work was going on, Britain at home was concerned in the preparation of one of the biggest efforts the world has ever known to stimulate

Empire trade and re-knit to the homeland some of the Dominions, Colonies and Dependencies whose ties to us had been loosened during the War years. The Wembley British Empire Exhibition was planned to do all these things, and more.

King George had set his heart on the Exhibition being a success, and made many important personal suggestions which were eventually incorporated in its gigantic design.

1924 A month or two before the opening date, he grew very disturbed at the reports which stated that overseas visitors would find muddy lanes and vistas of waste material awaiting them, owing to the work of preparation having fallen behind schedule. When, in April, over seven thousand workmen at Wembley began a strike, J. H. Thomas, who as Colonial Secretary had much to do with this great Empire trade show, reported to us that His Majesty was in despair.

After some talk we met the men, and told their leaders of the King's feelings ; and in the end patriotism prevailed, thus adding another example to the many where royal intervention, direct or indirect, has saved a difficult situation. Wembley was opened on the advertised date by the King. One of my duties as Lord Privy Seal was to attend him at the opening ceremony, and as I stood by his side I could detect the thankfulness in his voice that things had eventually come right.

The Exhibition was not entirely a financial success, mainly owing to a run of phenomenally bad weather. But it was planned with much more than a cash profit in mind, and in its bigger Empire objects it has already paid this nation a magnificent return.

It has often been stated that British Labour is a disrupting influence in the Empire. That is nonsense. In the same period of years, no Conservative or Liberal Government has done more than we did to knit together the great Commonwealth of Nations which Britain calls her Empire.

We realise clearly that this Commonwealth is one of the greatest factors for world peace and prosperity.

What we object to is the archaic principle held by certain of our opponents that the Colonies are still convict settlements under our autocratic thumb, and the Dominions simply places over which we can domineer. Labour methods are more likely to keep the Empire together because we realise that each of Britain's overseas possessions is as independent in spirit as we are ourselves.

We have stopped some of the wild flag-waving among school children which certain Tories thought so sentimentally affecting and morally right, and have tried to replace jingoistic parrot-cries with a more logical Colonial outlook. 1924

We have learned the lesson, apparently not absorbed by many people even at this late date, that Britain lost the United States of America by trying to browbeat sturdy Colonists; and that history is not unable to repeat itself. Far from wanting to lose our Colonies, we are trying to keep them.

In a French primer, *Les Lectures des Petites*, printed since the War, and very popular in French schools, the following sentences occur, to be completed by the innocent pupils :

> "The Germans killed . . . The Germans destroyed . . . The Germans burned . . ."

and so on. An illustration shows a German soldier shooting a French child, and beneath it runs the legend :

> "My child, you will not forget these crimes?—I promise that I will never do so, mother."

This shows one way in which infant minds are being trained, not only in France, but in Germany and elsewhere, to prepare for another inconclusive, wasteful, cruel period of international carnage. Labour prefers less imperialism and more common sense.

I have mentioned how we settled the Wembley strike.

We had a good many other chances of showing that we could soothe Labour troubles better than the other political parties.

A big railway strike occurred very soon after we took office. On the day it was settled, the Transport Workers gave notice of a strike that would call out 100,000 men. This action brought our shipping trade to a standstill, but it was soon and satisfactorily ended, on fair terms.

A coal strike, a London Transport strike, a building trades strike and a strike at Covent Garden each gave us passing anxieties, but all were finally settled.

1924 Over the whole period of our Government, there was a marked diminution of strikes and lock-outs as compared with any previous eight months since the War. Nearly all those which did occur were arranged for when our predecessors were in office, and the number of working days lost from this cause, compared with the corresponding months of the preceding few years, shows a reduction that runs into millions of days.

It needs a workman to understand and settle justly the grievances of workmen, and most of the Labour leaders had, like myself, " been through the mill."

Chapter IV

1924—Government defeats—Leading the Government—Wheatley's Housing Act—Work of the first Labour Government—Roads and electricity—End of the 1924 Government—The Campbell case—Did we tamper with the Law ?—The Zinoviev Letter sensation—Proofs that it was a forgery—Rumours the Cabinet did not know—Admission that no one ever saw the Zinoviev Letter—Foreign Office official dismissed—The Ku-Klux-Klan interrupt my election meetings—Victory scenes in Platting.

During MacDonald's absences at the important League of Nations meetings in Geneva, I was faced with a number of difficulties in the House of Commons.

1924 Several times the Government was defeated, and I had to take the responsibility in the Prime Minister's stead. But I made it clear that we should not go out except on losing a vote of confidence, and for several months our opponents did not care to drive things thus far.

Curbed as we were, it was impossible to introduce any measures of an unconventional nature. I had a personal wish, at the time, to arrange for a subsidy for British opera. Those who do not know the British workman believe him capable of only the crudest appreciations. I know, however, that he loves good music, and finds in it very often an escape from the sordid conditions of work and existence.

But our good purpose had to be put aside during our first term of office. The sword of Damocles hung over our heads ; we knew that our time would be short, and that only matters of national importance must be dealt with.

One of these which will not soon be forgotten was Wheatley's Housing Act, which has since been described as " the biggest piece of legislation of recent years."

John Wheatley, as our Minister of Health, found the terrible shortage of houses in 1924 crippling his best work. Bad housing and overcrowding means the death of children, and the spread of disease and vice. In a speech in the House at this time, I pointed out that—" Our prisons and our public lavatories are better built than the dwellings of millions of the poor. Many an ex-prisoner finds his home less weather-proof and less comfortable than his cell in gaol."

Under a previous government it had been decided that 100,000 working-class houses should be built each year, in order merely to prevent the existing shortage from increasing. Certain legislation was passed in 1923 along these lines ; but in the following twelve months only about 30,000 houses were built, and most of these were offered for sale at prices wildly beyond the reach of poor people.

You cannot build houses by Act of Parliament alone, and we knew it. Therefore, using methods which I had proved successful at the Food Ministry in 1918, Wheatley called together experts representing all shades of housing and house-occupying opinion, and then arranged for the building, not of a few thousand but of two and a half million houses, over a period of years.

1924 Legislation was introduced to provide generous financial assistance so that the new houses could be let at low rents, and could eventually provide a separate dwelling for every family in the land. A continuous policy of slum-clearance was also arranged.

A Profiteering Bill was introduced to ensure that the sale prices and rent of the houses would be kept at reasonable figures. But we were sent out of power before this Bill could be brought into law ; and our successors, apparently having no objection to a little profiteering, showed no desire to finish our work.

An important feature of our housing programme was that it provided employment for an increasing number of people. We made special arrangements with the Trades Unions to see that adequate labour would be available, and to foresee and prevent trouble and delay from strikes.

Apart from this work on the basic cause of national ill-health, we were responsible for other considerable improvements, including a health service grant for maternity, child welfare, and the treatment of tuberculosis and cancer, that exceeded the previous best by over a quarter of a million pounds. 1924

We relieved unemployment by abolishing the three-weeks gap, extending the period of benefit from twenty-six weeks in a year to forty-one weeks, and getting over 200,000 men and women back to work. Toiling a fifteen-hour day ourselves, we worked incessantly to obtain an eight-hour day and a five-day week for our own working-classes.

Labour was not in favour, in the first place, of Lloyd George's legislation giving unemployment pay without any vestige of work or return; it felt that national money should bring in something when it is spent on either rich or poor and that the unemployed themselves would prefer to earn their pay rather than receive what is given as a form of national charity.

But we were not in power long enough, nor were we in sufficient strength to change the system in 1924; and we felt that, however imperfect conditions of unemployment pay might be, they were not bettered by clauses which made workless men and women come cap in hand like beggars. The country which had failed to find them work should certainly not be allowed to starve them for its own inefficiency.

We brought 10,000 people out of work-houses, and reduced the number receiving out-relief by over 200,000 more. Labour was not satisfied that old people should have to wait till seventy before getting pensions, and put in hand a scheme for reducing the age to sixty-five. If the Biblical "three-score and ten years" be accepted as the probable average limit of life for a human being, it will be seen that to promise pensions after that age was a cruel joke more appropriate to some tyrannical *Arabian Nights* caliph than to the Parliament of a civilised land.

More work was provided for the unemployed by the planning of a system of main transmission lines for electricity to be caried all over Great Britain. The Grid Scheme, as it has since been called, was outlined completely during our first term of office.

A programme of arterial road development was also begun, which would eventually cost over £13,000,000, mainly to be drawn from the Road Fund. It was arranged that the new roads should be planned so as to carry the vastly increased motor traffic that was visualised, and has since become a reality; and that trees should be planted, and powerful and artistic bridges built, so that, within fifty years, our road system would become one of the most beautiful and effective in the world.

1924 Despite fierce opposition, we did what we could to improve the conditions under which British workmen had to spend their days. I could remember my own time in a cotton-mill, when I had to work in a sort of bathing-slip because of the intense heat, and when for months on end I never saw the sun at all except on Sundays. Other Labour Ministers had tried coal-mining, engine-driving and so on, and could speak with authority on needed reforms.

We introduced Bills to protect workers in dangerous occupations, and to give extra safety to women and children. We enforced better conditions of lighting, heating and ventilation in factories, better sanitation, and more frequent inspection of factory and business premises.

In particular, we did what we could to ensure better working conditions for miners. Statistics show that it is ten times more dangerous to work in a mine than in a factory. How often we read that a circle of miners' families stands bleakly round a pithead where a disaster has taken place, waiting to hear whether fathers, brothers and lovers will ever come to the surface alive again.

The story is so familiar now that it seems that after reading one it is simply a matter of waiting for the next.

Much of our work was stultified by the Opposition, and more was eventually ruined because our successors in office refused to carry on what we had well begun. But I am proud to have served as Deputy Leader of a Government with the record that we made in 1924.

The time came, after we had been in power only a few months, when we could no longer " hold the fort " in the Commons against the unceasing attacks of the opponents who so heavily outnumbered us.

Labour was eventually defeated, not because we were doing badly, but because our rivals feared that we were doing too well! When we took office, the Liberals thought we should not succeed and the Tories hoped we should fail. After eight months of our work, the Liberals, fearing (and with reason) for their own political future, turned against us. They had helped us to office; now they went over to the Tories and turned us out on the most trumpery excuse ever elevated to a level of national importance.

A Mr. Campbell, a war-crippled Communist, published in a paper called *The Workers' Weekly* an article exhorting soldiers, sailors and airmen to refuse to shoot down their comrades should they be called upon to do so when quelling British labour troubles. 1924

On August 5th, Campbell was brought to trial under the Incitement to Mutiny Act, and on the following day one or two Socialist M.P.'s protested in the House against the prosecution. When the affair came before the court for a second hearing, the case was withdrawn, on the advice of Sir Patrick Hastings, our Attorney-General, who told us that it would be inadvisable to proceed with it at the moment on political grounds. We did not want to make a martyr of such a man in such a cause, nor did we wish to court a split in our own ranks over such a trivial affair.

But a remark made by Hastings on the matter was overheard by certain Tories, and they hurried to Baldwin with their information, and persuaded him to table a vote of censure on the Government conduct.

Baldwin, always a master at inflaming the emotions of the public, promptly accused us of having tampered with the Law. The phrase sounded well, and he knew that the Englishman reveres something that he vaguely calls " the Law " more than any other of his national possessions.

Actually, Baldwin's excuse was farcical. All Governments, and most of all Tory Governments, " interfere with the Law," inasmuch as they decide whether certain prosecutions are good policy or not. If they are not, they do not take place.

Later, when I was discussing this matter with Lord Haldane, an acknowledged authority, he laughed at the suggestion that Governments should *not* interfere with political prosecutions. There are many examples of such interference by Governments not of the Labour persuasion.

Indeed, the Law officers of the Crown are constantly advising Ministers whether or not certain proceedings should be instituted. If this were not the case, what is the use of these officers ? Governments, in fact, appoint Law officers for this very purpose !

The fact was that, in the autumn of 1924, Baldwin and Asquith agreed that if Labour remained in office much longer, such a lot of obvious good would be done to the country that Labour would hold power for many years to come. Such a prospect alarmed all good Liberal and Tory Party men ; so we were struck down with the first weapon that came to hand.

1924 Sir Robert Horne proposed a vote of censure on the Government, which Hastings tried to turn aside by taking the entire responsibility of the Campbell case on himself. Bitter debating followed, and long before it had reached any conclusion, Lloyd George saw Austen Chamberlain and set on foot a conspiracy to go into the Lobby together and put Labour out.

The Conservative vote of censure was heavily defeated, but a Liberal amendment followed demanding a Committee of Investigation, and it was carried by a fair majority. What the chief conspirators failed to accomplish, their henchmen ably concluded with a dagger-thrust in Labour's back.

We had made both motions votes of confidence, so MacDonald was forced either to seek a General Election or else to resign. George V, seeing that trouble was coming, hurried back from Balmoral to meet the crisis. MacDonald called an emergency Cabinet, and we discussed what should be done. After a stormy talk, we decided to go to the country. MacDonald had an interview with the King, and obtained his consent to dissolve Parliament.

I went back to Manchester to discover whether or not my electors there approved my work as a leader of the first British Labour Government. I felt confident, then, that Labour would return to Westminster in increased strength.

But neither I nor any other member of the Government was aware that our opponents were already raising one of the greatest of the unscrupulous series of election bogys with which they have since frightened the public and ensured a precarious but almost unbroken tenure of office for themselves. New times, new manners, as the proverb says. Before 1924, when we showed conclusively that Labour could bring peace, prosperity and reduced taxation to the country, there were no election bogys. Since then, there has not been a single General Election without one. Some astounding methods have been devised from time to time to keep us out of power. 1924

The election work began quietly, but five days before polling date, on Saturday October 25th, a national sensation was caused. While in Manchester conducting my election campaign, I was shown a London newspaper splashed all over with black headlines announcing the publication in its columns of a secret State document supposed to be the property of the British Foreign Office !

This document was the famous Zinovieff Letter.

The letter was an extraordinary farrago. It stated that as the peaceful extermination of Capitalism was impossible, the British armed forces should be riddled with propaganda to prepare them to turn their arms against the capitalist system.

Zinovieff was President of the Executive Committee of the Communist International at Moscow, and his letter was alleged to have been sent to the Central Committee of the British Communist Party. It was stated that a copy of the letter had fallen into the hands of the Foreign Office ; who had sent it, with a sharp request for an explanation, to M. Rakovski, Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in London.

The Newspaper which started this astonishing tale was the *Daily Mail*. Ever since that day, the Labour Party have been trying to find out how this publication obtained a copy of a secret Foreign Office document.

The phenomenon cannot be explained.

1924 When we read about the Zinovieff Letter in our newspapers, my Cabinet colleagues and I found that we were in a situation unprecedented in British political history. A State matter of which the Government knew nothing was being discussed in every public-house in the country. M. Rakovski immediately stigmatised the letter in his official reply to the Foreign Office, as " a clumsy forgery." Certainly he should have been in a position to judge, since he knew Zinovieff personally. As MacDonald had not instructed us in the matter, and still did not speak of it, we accepted the Soviet Minister's word, and disowned the forgery and everything connected with it.

But our action alone, without that of our Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, did not satisfy the country. People rightly asked why the one man in the

Government who could speak with authority on foreign affairs remained mysteriously silent.

MacDonald's timidity, and his obstinate refusal immediately to denounce this obvious forgery for what it was, lost us the election. Following the trumped-up Campbell affair, it was indeed singularly fortunate for the Tories that a second Communist scare should arise so opportunely, despite the fact that its antecedents were more than doubtful!

Days after the original sensation, while the country still buzzed like a beehive that has been kicked, and while the *Daily Mail* and other newspapers uttered daily nonsense about Russian gold and anarchist terrorism, MacDonald lamely admitted that he had sent instructions to the Foreign Office to find out whether the Zinovieff Letter was authentic. He also stated that the letter had been published by the Foreign Office without his instructions, and with its origin still in doubt.

By the time his statement was published, of course, 1924 the country had made up its mind that the forgery was a genuine letter. Why, even had this been the case, it should have been considered to affect the Labour Party, any more than a letter from an Italian Fascist to Sir Oswald Mosley should be expected to influence the Conservatives, I cannot conceive. But one of the Tory moves against us has always been to muddle the issue between Labour and Communism, though a Communist is no more a left-wing Labour man than a Mohammedan is a left-wing member of the Church of England!

Two lines of official enquiry were instituted later to go into the matter of the authenticity of the Zinovieff Letter. All they discovered was that no original of the letter existed, or had ever been seen by any Government department or any private individual. Everything had been done from "copies."

Those copies were forgeries. There *was* no original.

When Parliament met again, I questioned Sir Austen Chamberlain, the new Foreign Secretary, as to whether any member of the Conservative Party Enquiry Committee had ever seen the original letter, of which they made such election capital that they were returned with a tremendous majority for more than four years of office.

His answer was—" No ! "

Since then, much has happened to the three persons most concerned in the Zinovieff Letter forgery. MacDonald has changed sides in politics ; Zinovieff himself has been executed for rebellion by the Soviet ; and Rakovski was implicated in the great Moscow Treason Trial in January, 1937.

But the " Letter " is a shameful mystery still.

Zinovieff is reported to have said previously that " We Communists must fight against MacDonald, and support him as the rope supports the hanging man." Since he was thus uncompromisingly opposed to British Labour, because of its moderate views, it was doubly unfortunate for us that we should lose the autumn 1924 election because Tory newspapers started labelling him our friend !

As a result of the Zinovieff sensation, that election was one of the most bitter I have ever known.

1924 In Platting, considerable opposition was organised against me, and one newspaper announced, a little prematurely, that—" The circular issued to-day by the Irish Self-Determination League completely robs Mr. Clynes of any faint hope he may have of retaining his seat."

At one of my meetings I was considerably astonished, while I was speaking, to see a sinister procession of white-clad figures burst suddenly into the hall. Women screamed, men shouted and children cowered. The invaders were clad in the dreaded robes and cowls of the Ku-Klux-Klan.

Having read of the terrorism exercised by this abominable secret society in America and elsewhere, I was somewhat uneasy as to what would happen to the meeting. I need not have been.

A growl of anger went up from some of the men whose wives had been hustled. The Klansmen uttered weird cries and began to issue commands, but a scuffle ensued and some blows were struck. There was a short spell of confusion, and then the terrible Klansmen were roughly bundled out into the street by a score of burly Labour supporters. The invaders did not return for more.

Nothing further was heard of the secret society interference; they evidently found Manchester less to their liking than America. When the results of the polling were announced, it was disclosed that I had retained my seat in a three-cornered contest by a majority of over 1,000 votes. This was an increase on my majority during the previous General Election.

In the hours of waiting for the Platting result to be announced, the Popular Picture Theatre, which I was using as my temporary headquarters, was packed to the doors, and a silent crowd many thousands strong filled the streets outside. Conflicting rumours sent them alternately into despair and delight, and when it was ascertained that I had won, and I arrived in a car, the cheering masses were packed so densely that I had to be carried over their heads in a chair, or I should never have got into the theatre at all. For ten minutes after I arrived, I could not get a hearing, and when I was able to speak I doubt whether more than a score or so of people heard what I said.

It was significant that the Liberals, who had put us out of power, sustained an appalling reverse. In Platting, my Liberal opponent lost his deposit. Elsewhere, Asquith himself lost his seat.

Thus the country endorsed its opinion of a Party that 1924
had turned suddenly on us in a moment of crisis.

Chapter V

1924–1926—1924 General Election results—Liberalism receives a death-blow—Inefficient M.P.s—A visit to Denmark—The menace from the coal-fields—Labour's work in Opposition—Winning by-elections—Causes of the General Strike—Government preparations nine months before—" State of Emergency " declared by the King—Why I opposed the principle of a General Strike—A million miners locked out—Interviews with Baldwin—Last-minute Labour efforts for peace—The Strike begins.

1924 Although I held my seat at Platting, Labour representatives in other parts of the country were not all so fortunate. We found, when the results were announced, that we had suffered a loss of 42 seats, thus reducing our Members in the Commons to 151.

It is interesting to note, however, as an index of the nation's feeling about our few months of work, that the Labour *vote increased* from 4,348,379 at the beginning of 1923, to 5,551,549 after the vituperation concerning the Campbell case and the hysterics of the Zinovieff Letter sensation. Only one Labour Cabinet Minister lost his seat—Mr. F. W. Jowett, who had been our First Commissioner of Works.

The real sufferers in the autumn of 1924 were the Liberals.

The Party which had ruled England for so long before the War, which had dominated our policy from 1914 to the end of 1922, and which had sent the thunderous names of Gladstone, Joseph Chamberlain, Rosebery, Campbell-Bannerman, Asquith and Lloyd George re-echoing through the world, was suddenly almost wiped out. It returned less than fifty Members ; and they leaderless, for Asquith had been rejected by his electorate.

Since that day, the Liberals have never formed either a Government or an Opposition. Dwindling with each passing year, a few of them are still to be found on the Opposition benches, dreaming of the power and the glory that will never return.

They put Labour into office for the first time in our history. They hurled Labour from office because Labour was succeeding too well. They were too timid to allow political rivals generous treatment when the country's weal would have been served by doing so. They allowed themselves to be jockeyed by the Tories into deserting the real friends of the Country and putting Party politics before national need.

The electors have never forgotten. They will never forget.

As a result of trickery before and during the Election, the Conservatives managed to secure an overwhelming representation in the new Parliament. With 413 Members, they held a majority of 211 over the other Parties combined—a majority in itself greater than the total of the Opposition ! 1924

What would not Labour have done with such power ? Yet when the House met again, and the Socialist Government resigned, Baldwin's new forces commenced one of the most diffident periods of rule since the War.

It is a Parliamentary axiom that a strong Opposition makes for progress. Certainly, between 1924 and 1929, the country discovered that an unwieldy majority on the Tory side made for somnolence. They had nothing to fear so nothing was done. Half-empty Government benches became the rule. Less than half the Government forces could overwhelm the Opposition when every man of us was mustered to fight an important measure. But there were hardly any important measures and for the lesser ones a mere handful of Tories was enough to carry things through.

I wonder sometimes how many M.P.s would be " sacked " each year if there were at Westminster any system of clocking-in such as most big businesses now employ, and if the penalty for lateness, absence or inattention to the nation's business was the same as that for carelessness in private profit-making.

Too many Members use the House of Commons merely as a useful club, with privileges beyond the ordinary and an annual wage instead of a periodic subscription. Labour men are not the worst offenders in this way.

During 1924, I paid a visit to Denmark to study Co-operative methods there, and to meet members of 1924 the Danish Labour Party. I spent three weeks as the guest of Mr. Charles Hansen, a famous Danish bacon merchant and farmer, who had helped me a great deal as a man of fine public spirit during my time at the Food Ministry.

The Danes have brought their bacon production, which is their principal industry, to such a stage that most of the population live at a first-class level of comfort on a spending-power no higher than that of the average English wage-earner. They get more for their money. Moreover, as they are a peaceful nation and not given to political sabre-clattering, they are taxed only nominally for armaments for which we in England have to pay so highly. Consequently, more money is left in the citizen's pocket, and less finds its way to the profiteer.

Most of the Danish farms are family affairs, run on a profit-sharing basis. This is an idealised equivalent of Co-operative methods, and produces wonderful results.

My visit was a pleasant one, but I soon grew anxious to return to England, where grave issues were facing the new Conservative Government, which showed no anxiety or hurry in dealing with them. Black clouds already hung over the coal-fields. Masters and men had come almost to a pitch where it appeared that a national struggle must ensue, unless the miners were prepared to accept terms that would starve their wives and children.

The Government, which might have saved the situation, did nothing. Experts sent urgent warnings to Cabinet Ministers, but all pleas were ignored. Trade Union leaders, who foresaw an increasing danger of something resembling civil war, were arrogantly refused a hearing by those whose task it was to guide the nation's politics.

I spoke in the Commons, and so did others, of the menace from the coal-fields, but we night have been addressing the benches themselves, rather than the bored sprinkling of Government members who listened to us with ill-concealed yawns. It is not all enjoyment being a Labour M.P. We found it dreadful, during those dark days, exhausting our eloquence, begging almost with tears that South Wales, Durham, Lanarkshire and other places should be left with enough money to buy bread, and knowing that we were failing, and going on failing, to move the listless Conservatives who joked and whispered and never cared. 1925

It seemed so unfair ! They had never known what it felt like to be hungry and to have to stay hungry till one was faint. They had been educated to polished periods of histrionic eloquence ; we were forced to plead human necessity in rough voices, using such broken and inadequate words as our home-made vocabularies could with mental agony discover. We felt impotent.

The calm, slightly contemptuous faces round us never changed ; or if they did it was merely to express by a fleeting glance a well-bred deprecation of our ungentlemanly violence.

The matter of the coal-fields, being unpleasant, was courteously waved to one side. For a time, the Budget claimed attention. It was "admittedly based on the policy of relieving taxation on the rich by adding to the taxation of the poorer classes." We fought some of the clauses, but it was like a man resisting an avalanche.

Unemployment, which we had reduced, began to increase again. Our efforts to cut down the menacing size of Britain's fighting forces were swept away, and noblemen's younger sons found military and naval commissions, salaries and pensions awaiting them in abundance once more. The nation paid. Taxes rose, and prosperity disappeared. The portents of the 1929 Depression began to be obvious. A slump was round the corner, but meanwhile England was gay.

MacDonald had brought other Prime Ministers to Geneva, but Baldwin never went there. The nations of Europe, reluctant and suspicious, had made moves towards mutual trust and world peace when Britain's powerful presence alternately comforted and cajoled them ; but with that presence withdrawn, they began to peep covetously over their frontiers once more, and stoke the fires of their armaments foundries high.

1925 Always, in the English background, the shadow of coal-fields troubles grew bigger and darker. The coal-owners held nervous conferences. Trade Union officials hurried up and down the land. The miners at the pit-heads stared sullenly up from under penthouse brows, and the faces of the women in the mining villages grew sharp and grim. There were "incidents." Owners' cars were stoned. Windows were broken. Groups of unemployed miners muttered at every street-corner in the "black" districts. Labour Members in the House of Commons spoke doggedly of coming trouble, and were skilfully ruled out of order.

In March, 1925, MacDonald said :

> "Black clouds hang over the coal-fields. Will the employers meet the miners, so that the miners and their wives and families do not pay the price of peace by starvation? . . .
>
> "There is talk about the miners, railwaymen and the engineers coming to an arrangement. No greater calamity could come over the country than that there should be raised a great block of Unions on the one side and Capital on the other, engaged in a suicidal fight in industry. . . . The miners are only claiming decent human conditions."

The Government did not heed him or any of us. It went languidly about its business, passing Bills concerning the future of some parish pump, or advising an increase in beer to the inhabitants of lighthouses in Ross and Cromarty.

It did not even heed the political signs of the times. Labour increased its membership in the House by eleven seats at by-elections. But the Tories, with their overwhelming majority, apparently cared nothing for eleven seats.

Gradually the mines dispute assumed gigantic proportions. The miners summed up their attitude in a slogan invented by someone to whom political claptrap was more than common sense :

> " Not a minute on the day, not a penny off the pay."

The principle was not an unfair one, for prices of food and clothes and lodging had risen since the War, while miners' wages had fallen sharply. Any further fall would have meant less food and clothes than the men's bodies needed.

The owners, however, anxious only for profits, were not satisfied to meet difficult times with *status quo.* They insisted on a further reduction in wages all round, even though food prices remained unchanged, or even rose.

The Government still made no effort whatever to avert the coming clash that the newspapers were now prophesying. Far from encouraging overtures for peace, they first tacitly and then openly inspired preparations for a pitched battle. The more hot-headed of the Tories were going about in a great state of jubilation in the autumn of 1925, boasting that a fight was coming which would smash Trade Union power for ever. They welcomed it, knowing that the casualties in that fight would be drawn from the ranks of starving miners, not from among themselves. 1925

In September, eight months before the General Strike, the " Organisation for the Maintenance of

Supplies " opened its offices and began to enrol hundreds of members of what amounted to a sort of unofficial union of strike-breakers. Soon, it had enlisted 100,000 volunteers, who were prepared to undertake blackleg labour to run trains, lorries and public services in the event of a great strike on behalf of the miners.

It is impossible to believe that this organisation lacked Government support.

Flour, meat and milk companies were trained and organised. Men were secretly taught how to drive railway engines. Strike-breaking money and equipment were collected.

1925 The trouble in the coal-fields came to a head in the late summer of 1925. But the Government was not then ready for a stand-up fight with the Unions, so about £25,000,000 was granted to subsidise the coal industry for nine months, while weapons could be prepared with which to defeat the miners and force them to accept starvation terms.

A Government Commission was set up to examine the whole cause of the dispute, but it did only what most Government Commissions do—cost the country money and produced no practical results. Meanwhile, A. J. Cook, the Secretary of the Miners' Federation, was uttering inflammatory speeches to the men and making all chances of negotiation very remote. He seemed to want to fight as much as did some of the Die-hards on the Government benches.

With all this Conservative encouragement behind them, the mine-owners took an uncompromising stand in 1926. They said that unless the men would accept longer hours and lower pay on May 1st., when the coal subsidy came to an end, they would lock out a million workers. Profits had to be kept up at all costs. If the taxpayer would do it no longer, then the men must ; and if they would not, then they should get no wages at all, and find out what a taste of starvation was like for bringing them to their senses.

On April 20th, 1926, George V proclaimed a " state of emergency," and thousands of special constables were immediately enrolled. Hyde Park was closed, and used as a military camp and food distribution centre. Armoured cars and tanks began to rumble into London, Southampton, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and other great cities. Troops in full war-kit, with "tin hats" and rifles tramped through the streets. Aldershot hummed like a beehive.

In the next few days, orders were issued to economise gas and electricity, Post Office restrictions came into force, and the grey shapes of warships glided up the Thames.

All these preparations were, perhaps, the duty of the 1926
Government on whom lay the responsibility for averting national panic and preventing any effort "to overthrow constitutional rule." But they were made in a spirit of bombast rather than of precaution. It seemed as though every effort was being made deliberately to irritate Labour feeling all over the country. The steps taken constituted a contemptuous challenge.

It must have seemed to many that the Government was announcing that it would employ the military, naval and civil powers of the State to force miners to starve so that coal-owners' profits should not shrink.

No General Strike was ever planned or seriously contemplated as an act of Trade Union policy. I told my own Union, in April, that such a stroke would be a national disaster, and a fatal step to Union prestige; and such it eventually proved to be.

A national strike, if complete, would inflict starvation first and most on the poorest of the population. Riot or disorder could not feed them, and any appeal to force would inevitably be answered by superior force. How could such an action benefit the working classes?

When the idea of a General Strike to protest against the lock-out of the miners was first announced, I put before the executive of my Union alternative plans for substantial financial support to the miners, supplemented by industrial action likely to afford the necessary resistance to the mine-owners' attack. Other Labour leaders made similar statements, but the extreme view carried the day. Part of the reason for this was that the agitators, who had promised miracles before a Labour Government came into power, now had to advocate direct action to save their own faces.

In an atmosphere of growing uneasiness and obstinacy. April drew towards its end. Thomas, Snowden, Henderson, MacDonald and I moved about behind the scenes, trying to find some way out of the *impasse*, hindered on the one hand by the armed preparations of the Government, and on the other by the ferocious statements and wild promises of Cook and his following.

At the end of April, the coal subsidy ended, and *one million miners were locked out.* It was this action that began the General Strike, not any commencement of hostilities on the part of the men.

The object of a lock-out is to deprive people of food until they agree to dictated terms. Those who foolishly call the 1926 affair " a challenge to Democracy " should remember that it began by an attempt to starve a million workmen and their families.

1926 During the last few weeks before the lock-out, Baldwin tardily consented to receive committees and deputations, but he did little except give them a hearing.

On the evening of April 30th, the T.U.C. General Council met the miners' representatives and tried to discover terms of peace. After that, some of us went on to see Baldwin, offering to negotiate if the Government would accept the terms suggested by its own Royal Commission. Baldwin refused, saying that the miners must agree to lower wages.

Next morning, Saturday, May 1st, a stormy meeting of T.U.C. representatives took place in the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street. Amid a tense silence, votes were taken for and against a General Strike. When the results were declared, it was found that an overwhelming majority were in favour of action in support of the miners.

Plans were made for the conduct of the Strike, and committees were set up to deal with necessary points. As I left, a newspaper correspondent grasped me by the arm, and asked : " Is it going to be peace, Mr. Clynes ? "

I was too much moved to do more than shake my head in answer, and go on my way.

Zero hour for the Strike had been arranged for midnight, May 3–4th. But there was still a faint hope that 1926 the coal quarrel would be settled before that time came.

During the evening of May 1st, Baldwin received a T.U.C. Committee, and as a result of their talk, it was agreed that conversations should be carried on by three representatives from our side, and three from the Government. Talk went on until the small hours of the Sunday morning, and gradually agreement was reached.

It was decided that the General Strike notices should be withdrawn, the coal subsidy continued for some weeks, and meanwhile a real effort should be made by the Government to accept the findings of the Royal Commission, to the substance of which the miners' executives had already agreed. The meeting then broke up, prior to submitting these lines of arbitration to the T.U.C. and the Cabinet.

After an hour or two of sleep, the representatives on both sides were about again, attending committees, holding discussions, trying to placate extremists, and gradually forcing a way through the doubt and despondency towards proper peace terms. The Cabinet sat that Sunday from shortly after breakfast till nearly midnight. Late that night, the T.U.C. Committee and the miners' leaders met the full Cabinet in Downing Street, and work began there in a more hopeful atmosphere than had been evident for many weeks.

Discussions had been going on for about an hour, and it seemed as though only minor matters remained to be cleared up, when the news came, like a bombshell, that some compositors on the *Daily Mail* had refused to set up a virulent and provocative article concerning the dispute.

I believe there would never have been a General Strike but for this trivial incident.

When Baldwin was informed of it, he rose from the table and suddenly refused to continue the crucial conference any further. He said that a pistol had been held to the head of the Government.

What this sinister phrase meant, we had no idea. In such a pass, it would seem that the dignity of His Majesty's Government would have been better served by finding a solution to the dispute that was to involve millions in suffering, and ignoring the action of an inflamed imperialist newspaper and its irritated employees. I think his nerves were strained from the worry of the previous weeks, and this last irritation caused them to give way altogether.

However, the negotiations stopped abruptly despite everything we could say. Pique triumphed.

With other Union leaders, I sought an interview about midnight with the Prime Minister and his colleagues in a last-minute effort to show that the compositors' strike was isolated and unofficial, without our approval, and to plead, almost on our knees, for a less cruel arbitrament than he was now forcing upon us—an open fight between the workers and the Cabinet.

1926 But the Cabinet had left No. 10, and the place was deserted save by a single sleepy attendant.

Thus we were swept into a fight that did no one any good, and cost the country millions of pounds. The struggle was caused first by the lock-out of the miners, and later by the muddle of the Government, which made no serious attempts towards peace, and seemed to welcome an excuse for a fight with the Unions.

On the Monday, hectic efforts were made to find a way to peace. But the Cabinet was now definitely too proud to negotiate. Some of us spoke in the House of Commons, but to no effect. Baldwin said stolidly that it was hoped that negotiations would be continued, and warded off all questions with practised ease. Driven into a corner, he turned on us and quoted an article written some time before by Ramsay MacDonald in *The New Leader :*

> " All my life I have been opposed to the sympathetic strike. It has no practical value ; it has one certain result—a blinding reaction. Liberty is far more easily destroyed by those who abuse it than by those who oppose it."

" I agree with every word of that ! " commented Baldwin to the hushed and crowded House.

Then he sat down, having avoided once more any practical reference to our wishes to prevent the Strike.

The last few hours ticked remorselessly away. As I listened to the Commons debate, I noticed more and more Members looking furtively at their watches.

That evening, A. J. Cook and one or two others had an interview with Baldwin. Queues stood outside No. 10, patiently awaiting news. Just before midnight, Cook came out, shouldering through the onlookers. He did not answer the enquiries that were called to him, but went by taxi back to the place where the rest of the miners' leaders awaited him.

" The Strike's on ! " he announced grimly. The last forlorn hope had failed. 1926

Next morning, millions awoke in a half-paralysed Britain. The Great Strike had begun.

Chapter VI

1926—Beginning of the General Strike—The Trade Unions kept the peace—What the King said about the Strike—A Budget debate that took three minutes—How the public faced the Strike—Simon states that the Strike was illegal—Union work—When the Archbishop of Canterbury was censored—Cause of the split between Lloyd George and the Asquith Liberals—Why the T.U.C. made peace—The miners victimised—Spiteful legislation—Lessons of the General Strike.

May 4th, 1926, disclosed an extraordinary state of affairs in our big cities.

The railway stations were silent and empty of trains. In London, only about 40 buses ran, out of a total of 5,000. Underground stations were deserted. But throughout the day the streets were thronged with black, crawling masses of pedestrians, cars, bicycles, horse-vehicles—even people on roller-skates.

I had to walk most of the way from my house at Putney to the House of Commons.

1926 All workers were called out from railways, road, sea and air transport. Building, printing, iron and steel, gas and electricity—all were at a complete standstill. Outside the offices of every essential public service, queues of volunteers started in the early morning, and grew and grew all day long, till hundreds had been accepted and thousands turned away.

Mr. Baldwin, using the wireless which was then an almost untried political weapon, spoke in an anxious voice. "Keep steady," he pleaded. "Remember, peace on earth comes to men of good will."

Never was an appeal more bravely answered. There were a few isolated acts of violence; unstable elements in London, Glasgow, Liverpool and elsewhere came into contact with police and military, and a few men were killed.

But, in the main, a spirit of wonderful tolerance and good humour prevailed. Foreign countries, loudly prophesying the doom of Britain and openly asking which of them would be expected to give King George sanctuary, looked on amazed. Instead of civil war, they reported that organised teams of strikers were playing football matches with teams of local police. Strikers' pickets shared strong tea and gossip with the special constables who were supposed to be preventing them from acts of aggression.

For the order which prevailed, the Trade Unions were entitled to a great deal of credit. Orders were issued to all strikers not to interfere with essential national services, or to cause civil disturbance. 1926

In common with my principal colleagues, I avoided speech-making, and advised against mass-meetings of strikers or sympathisers.

None the less, considerable anxiety was felt on both sides, especially during the first few days of the strike. The strike-pay we issued to Union members was villified by improvised newspapers, suddenly turned scurrilous, as "Russian Gold." I need hardly say that this stupid phrase had no truth in it.

But had there been no strike-pay to keep the men's wives and families from famine, terror and revolution might well have stalked through the land. Starving men would have been violent.

We of the Trades Unions *bought national peace* in 1926 at a terrible price. The cost to my own Union alone was over £200,000. More than twenty million pounds altogether was lost in wages during the stoppage. We had to make it good ; and we did so in order to prevent rioting and as a duty to our members.

J. H. Thomas, representing the railwaymen, found, early in the Strike, that his duties took him to Buckingham Palace. King George asked him a number of questions, and expressed his sympathy for the miners. At the end of the talk, His Majesty, who was gravely disturbed, remarked, it is said: "Well, Thomas, if the worst happens, I suppose all this—" (with a gesture indicating his surroundings) "—will vanish?"

Fortunately for Britain and the world, it did not come to the worst. The Trades Unions saw to that.

Had we been self-seekers, "challenging the Constitution," or "threatening the State," as we were constantly accused of doing, our task would have been simpler. Recall, we had only to say to the millions of workmen who were on strike: "Now, boys, we've got no more strike-pay for you, and you will have to starve unless you take to the barricades and get justice and food by force!" Then, Revolution would certainly have come.

1926 There were many among us, bitterly disillusioned, who were aware that the miners were going to be forced nearer starvation level and conscious that any advice of ours to call off the Strike would be answered by cries of "Traitors!" A few spoke out for anarchy. I was against it, and so were the majority of us.

Commonsense won the day, but we got the abuse just the same, and still get it in some measure to this day.

The Council of the T.U.C. took up headquarters in Eccleston Square, in a house that had once belonged to Winston Churchill, most virulent of our opponents. Conferences took place almost hourly in what had been the Churchill dining-room. Messengers came and went ceaselessly; telephone bells rang and were answered and rang again.

We found that the British workmen had come out shoulder to shoulder, quiet, humorous, but deadly stubborn. We, the leaders, had never sought the Strike; our men to some extent ran away with us, sincerely determined to support a great class of underground labourers whose standard of living was otherwise to be forced below the limits of decency.

I was much moved by the deep and unselfish loyalty of the millions of workpeople who conducted the 1926 stoppage. There was no murmuring.

Meanwhile, the Government was organising its forces of strike-breakers with amazing rapidity and smoothness. According to plans drawn out in detail seven months earlier, the country was divided into areas, each ruled over by a Commissioner with extraordinary powers to maintain essential services, distribute food and prevent violence. Immense numbers of special constables were enrolled to supplement the police forces. Troops were moved to many danger-points.

The Prince of Wales, who had been abroad, flew back to London. The King and Queen remained at Buckingham Palace. Newspapers, unable to print proper issues, substituted single sheets. A Government propaganda organ, *The British Gazette*, was run at a loss by Mr. Churchill.

In the Commons, we faced an abnormal state of affairs 1926 without much excitement. But, for once in a way, Parliamentary business was put through with astounding celerity. The Budget Debate took exactly three minutes. The Betting Tax, which would normally have occupied many days or even weeks, was disposed of in under an hour. The then Prince of Wales and the Duke of York attended sittings, in the Gallery.

After a day or two of complete paralysis, transport systems began to run again, manned largely by sporting youths in " Oxford bags," who were as facetious as they were efficient. Legends appeared in the windows of buses, driven by amateurs, which read : " Don't throw stones at us. The passengers are in danger enough already ! " Policemen sat beside the drivers, and special constables occupied the conductors' platforms.

It became a point of honour for office workers to get to their offices somehow, even though they did nothing there except gossip about the progress of the strike. Cars immensely overloaded with passengers crawled about city streets. Cricket matches and theatrical productions were resumed. A few cars were turned over and burned by angry strikers, but except for jostling and abuse the passengers were not harmed. Armoured cars, tanks and troops bristling with weapons conveyed food lorries through the docks, but the need for all this display of force was never very apparent.

In the House, the Home Secretary admitted that naval ratings were being used in various parts of the country to defeat the strike.

Day by day, more trains, buses, trams and lorries were run by volunteer labour. At one London underground station, the staff was made up of four M.P.'s. On May 6th, over 1,700 trains were run.

1926 On the same day, a statement was made in the House of Commons that caused a great sensation. Sir John Simon, K.C., a recognised authority on Trade Union legal affairs, said in a speech that the whole General Strike was illegal, that every man in it was liable to be sued by his employers for damages, and that every leader was liable to the uttermost farthing of his personal possessions. He also stated that all Union funds could be seized at once—a remark that was greeted by jeers from one or two parts of the House, since it was obvious that such a step, with the ensuing starvation of millions of workmen, would immediately plunge the country into revolt or disorder.

A fact which has never been sufficiently made known is that Sir John Simon's opinion was apparently incorrect. Sir Henry Slesser, the ex-Solicitor-General, stated that it was wrong, but this fact was suppressed by the Government, who were only too thankful to use Simon's statement for propaganda purposes.

Apart from the legal question, it was a most curious decision thus to announce that the lock-out of a million miners was correct at law, but that a strike in aid of them was not. It seemed almost as though employers could do no wrong.

The thing that distinguishes slavery from liberty is the worker's right to sell or to withold his service. Sir John Simon was congratulated that night on his masterly disposition showing that workmen were breaking the law by refusing to be forced to work ; yet I think only slaves can be made to labour against their will.

The views of subtle legal minds, cleverly uttered in the mystic phrases of trained lawyers, pronounced the strike illegal, yet no one could point to a law which said that a small strike was legal, and that an illegal one might be determined by its dimensions. Are we then to suppose that all strikes are illegal ? If so, then Britain would be a profiteers' paradise indeed !

During the debate on Simon's statement, I said in the House that while the Strike might by lawyers' gymnastics be shown to infringe some obscure law, yet it was morally right. I thought it unwise, and said so at the time, but I still feel that, in view of the lock-out of the miners, it was not wrong.

To this day, I experience a sense of burning indignation whenever I reflect on the treatment of the miners that led up to the 1926 clash, and what happened to them afterwards when we had all been beaten to our knees.

Like other Union officials, I was kept busy during the Strike partly by the affairs of my own Union. In addition to paying our workless members, we assisted other Unions with considerable financial grants or loans. 1926

On May 4th we had 82,000 members affected, receiving dispute benefit. By the end of August, all but 8,000 members (nearly all of them colliery labourers) were back at work. We were then paying out about £6,000 a week. The coal dispute dragged on for about eight months, during all which time we faithfully kept up our payments. In no single instance was benefit reduced.

During the Strike, radio was used for the first time as a great political factor. Newspapers, as I have said, were almost non-existent, but a certain amount of censored news was broadcast each day, and Baldwin and others made several speeches.

A notable exception to the news that was broadcast was an appeal from the late Archbishop of Canterbury to the Government to cease from turning the Strike into a political issue, and to obtain a simultaneous cessation of the lock-out and the Strike. This appeal, which was arrived at after " full-dress " conferences with the chief representatives of all Protestant denominations, was not only censored from the air but from the columns of *The British Gazette*, only being included in the latter after pressure had been applied to Mr. Churchill in the Commons.

This censorship was not exercised when certain other famous clerics preached weighty sermons condemning the Strike as, in effect, a sin against God. Every publicity was accorded to such statements.

Since those days, the B.B.C. has in part become a Government department of immense importance in its potentialities for spreading any desired propaganda at the dictation of the Party in power. In the absence of any major national issue it could effect, it has held the balance fairly between the shades of political opinion though complaints have been made.

1926 Mr. Lloyd George was among those in the Commons who spoke most bitterly on the censoring of the Archbishop's appeal. To everyone's surprise, he was immediately repudiated by Lord Oxford and Asquith, Lord Grey, Lord Buckmaster and other leading Liberals. This split between the Liberal leaders has never been healed, and Lloyd George, whose powerful personality and magnificent knowledge of Parliamentary tactics might have brought his Party back to power again, has been an Ishmael ever since.

As the Strike went on, and it became obvious that the resources of the Government must inevitably wear down those of the strikers, bellicose members of the Cabinet put pressure on Mr. Baldwin, who was inclined to be moderate, to " teach Labour a lesson."

On May 10th, nearly 4,000 trains were running, and in other directions business was getting back towards normal. All the important national services were functioning fairly smoothly. The mails to Ireland and elsewhere were being carried on naval destroyers. In the Clyde, where rough mining and other elements had caused some trouble, the *Warspite*, the *Comus*, and the *Hood* (the world's biggest battleship), towered with their big guns outlined starkly against the sky. Three other warships overawed Liverpool. Destroyers anchored in the harbours of Cardiff, Harwich, Middlesbrough and Portsmouth.

In London, the power stations were manned by naval ratings. Other naval men worked in the docks, where machine-guns were held in case of need. When strikers at the docks threw a few stones at a food lorry, whose driver had made some insulting remarks to them while they lounged against the gates, a great demonstration was made. A convoy of food lorries, stretching for over two miles, was escorted towards the City by sixteen armoured cars with their guns manned, and the better part of a regiment of Guards in fighting kit.

The theatrical effect of this gesture was somewhat spoiled by the incessant shout of laughter from the crowds which watched the convoy pass between knots of astounded dockers at the gates.

Every day during the Strike, a special Committee met at the Home Office. It consisted of Sir Joynson Hicks, who was then Home Secretary, a few leading Ministers and permanent officials, and representatives of the Army, Navy and Police. At the orders of this Committee, bodies of troops were moved from city to city to march through districts where mobs gathered.

Fifty thousand special constables were enrolled in 1926
London alone.

The food situation in the country grew acute at one stage of the Strike. Food was not being distributed from the London Docks, because volunteer workers were afraid to go there. The time came when only enough food for two days was available in London, though there was a vast accumulation in the docks.

The Home Secretary met high military and naval officials that day. "Make your own plans," he said. "Use whatever forces you require—I give you *carte blanche*—but my orders are that the London Docks are to be opened at all costs."

That night, warships took hundreds of volunteer stevedores down the Thames. Next morning, over one hundred great food lorries were loaded with supplies, and were escorted through sullen thousands at the dock gates by two battalions of troops with fixed bayonets, supported by ten armoured cars, tanks, and hundreds of police.

At the Port of London, strikers turned off the electricity supply, but the Government sent a submarine, guarded by destroyers, and the submarine generated power which was run in a cable to the shore plant in the docks, which was thus able to carry on with its work.

Shortly before the stoppage came to an end, Mr. Baldwin broadcast an important speech. He said that the strikers must surrender unreservedly, but that the Government would see to it that they should not be victimised afterwards, and that every effort would be made to give fair terms to the miners.

Our Union funds were melting as swiftly as snow in spring sunshine. Up and down England, workmen stood bewildered while volunteers in thousands did their work. The whole crux of the struggle had been skilfully shifted by propaganda from a sympathetic protest at the unfair treatment of the miners to a Constitutional struggle between Parliament and anarchism. Half the strikers, puzzled and dispirited, began to believe that they had been jockeyed into a gesture against the King and the State.

1926 Slowly at first, and then faster, they began shamefacedly drifting back to work.

From the first day of the Strike, we who were officials of the great Unions had been trying to find some ground for negotiation and a return to peace, with honourable terms for the miners. Our efforts were crippled not so much by the attitude of the Government, though that was provocative enough, but by the stubborn obstinacy of the miners' representatives. They would discuss nothing, consider nothing, hear of nothing save a continuance of the Strike. Cook, in particular, was adamant. The more obvious the failure of the Strike became, the more savagely did he demand that no one should return to work.

Sir Herbert Samuel, the principal figure on the Royal Commission which had studied the mining conditions before the Strike began, now came forward with unofficial suggestions for peace terms. It was at Sir Abe Bailey's house in London that discussions on these terms took place. Eventually, terms were reached which were satisfactory to the T.U.C. representatives ; but the miners' leaders still stuck to their old slogan—" No arbitration whatever ! "

Their attitude had been understandable a fortnight earlier, but now they were simply shutting their eyes and telling the ocean to roll backwards.

The T.U.C. began to feel that nothing could satisfy the miners' leaders—nothing, at least, that we could possibly hope now to obtain for them.

An official statement was issued. It said :

> " The Miners' Federation, in turning down the Samuel Memorandum despite its acceptance by the General Council, has definitely rejected the Royal Commission report . . . The General Council is satisfied that however long the strike may last, they would be in the same position. . . . The Council does not feel justified in permitting its Unions to continue their sacrifice."

We had come to the parting of the ways. The miners' executive would not consider peace by compromise, either then or in the future. The Government was by this time in an unassailable position. The men of the T.U.C. knew that victory for the strikers had become impossible. They refused to keep men out any longer in a hopeless battle. 1926

On Wednesday, May 12th, shortly after midday, we called on Baldwin at No. 10. Mr. Pugh spoke on behalf of the T.U.C.:

> "We are here to-day, sir, to say that this General Strike is to be terminated forthwith in order that negotiations may proceed."

Baldwin passed a hand over his forehead. "I thank God for your decision!" he said soberly. A short discussion took place as to how the men could most swiftly be got back to work, and then the deputation trailed out of Downing Street, dispirited, defeated, knowing that the past eight days had done incalculable harm to Britain, and to the workers most of all, and that though they had been brought about not by our actions, we should always have to bear the stigma of them.

Immediately the Strike was called off, George V wished, it was said, to broadcast a message to the nation. After touching upon the steady behaviour of both sides in the stoppage, His Majesty added:

> "Let us forget whatever elements of bitterness the events of the past few days may have created, only remembering how steady and how orderly the country has remained, though severely tested, and forthwith address ourselves to the task of bringing into being a peace which will be lasting because, forgetting the past, it looks only to the future with the hopefulness of a united people."

1926 Mr. Baldwin, in the House and also in a broadcast speech, emphasised this view. He said that the country's business was not to triumph over those who had failed in a mistaken attempt, but to try to build up again a spirit of mutual trust. It was a pity that his words were so little heeded afterwards.

The General Strike cost the nation in unemployment pay half a million pounds only, owing to the far greater contributions made by the Unions in the form of strike pay. But the cost to our national trade was very serious. For many months, great numbers of strikers were unable to find jobs. On May 1st, 1926, just over a million people were receiving poor relief; but two months later the number had risen to nearly two and a half millions. Unemployment rose similarly.

In Parliament, other Labour Members and myself put all the pressure we could on the Government to settle the mines dispute, which was still as far from peace as ever.

Eventually, Baldwin sent suggestions to the owners and men, offering to accept the findings of the Royal Commission in all the main points, to set up a National Fuel and Power Council with Labour representatives, to investigate the possibilities of profit-sharing, and to establish pit committees to help out-of-work miners. A further subsidy of three million pounds was offered subject to certain concessions from the men regarding wages for a temporary period.

Both men and owners summarily rejected the proposals.

The mining dispute dragged on until November. 1926 The T.U.C. could do little except try to find terms of negotiation, and assist the starving miners with funds from the various Unions.

In the autumn, the Government deliberately took the side of the mine-owners by passing the Eight Hours Act, extending the miners' working day from seven to eight hours. Labour had to sit, humiliated and bitter, on the Opposition benches, and listen to smug speeches from the Conservative side as the Bill went inevitably on its way.

In November, the Miners' Federation could fight no longer. It was exhausted. The various mining districts were advised to get the men back to work with as little punishment from the masters as negotiation could obtain. The men took whatever pay was offered, and went below ground again. Most of them had to work longer than before, for less money. Many were half-starved. They had to put up with it. They were used to starvation, most of them.

Yet a day will come when these men will get justice. It cannot be delayed for ever.

Despite all the fine speeches after the Strike, to the effect that no one should show any rancour, Parliament was soon made busy forcing through perhaps the worst piece of vindictive and spiteful class legislation which our country has ever known.

This law not only made any future General Strike illegal, but was carefully calculated to cripple Trade Unions, and to prevent them gathering in the small sums which individual members had automatically paid in support of Parliamentary Labour effort.

1927 The Government forced this measure through the House of Commons without any regard to questions of mandate or electorate, as though a law affecting the lives of millions of voters were some trifling detail concerning a parish pump. And we Labour Members had to sit by and let it happen, despite our protests, because we were so hopelessly outnumbered in the House.

Whatever the law may say, it would not be easy to prevent great masses of workmen from acting in sympathy with other masses when influenced by the facts of a strong case, and by a sense of wrong inflicted on other workmen. Much depends on the intensity of this sense of wrong.

During 1937, about 25,000 busmen struck work, and were idle for a month. That stoppage ended without a single pane of glass being broken. It was not extended to a tube and tram strike because the sense of injustice was not deep enough, though most of us felt that the busmen had grievances which ought to be removed.

The injustice of the law of 1927 lay in the fact that it was not limited to an industrial or social purpose. It was, in fact, shaped as a Tory Party weapon.

It did not propose to interfere with working-class contributions for industrial action on economic or wage questions, but it raised a bar against contributions being paid for political purposes.

That was not only an injustice. It was a blunder. The General Strike was not influenced by political action. On the contrary, Labour M.P.s did all they could to counsel moderation, and not only keep the men within the law, but advise them to have a care for public convenience and national well-being.

Political tempers grew with the introduction of the Government Bill. It was forced through, but what has it done ? It has not, of course, prevented Trade Unions from carrying on their political work. It has made great difficulties, but these have been consistently overcome, because a law which cannot be respected cannot achieve its purpose.

The law enabled Trade Unions to do by ballot just exactly what they previously did without a ballot. That is to say, a union had to complete a ballot on whether a levy for political purposes should be paid. If a majority decided in favour, the minority against it were not required to pay, and the majority in favour could only pay after they had individually signed a form declaring their desire to do so. Members without any such law could always do that. 1927

This procedure enforced by law is without precedent in the case of any other Act of Parliament dealing with any society or institution. This singular and spiteful treatment of Trade Unions will some day be reversed, as the equally vicious Osborne and Taff Vale judgments were reversed.

In a recent Parliamentary session, a Bill was passed requiring employers in the cotton-spinning industry to pay a levy to attain certain ends in the trade. When Labour men suggested that this levy should be subject to a ballot by employers, and to the procedure of contracting-in to pay it, they were laughed at ; and of course this Parliamentary Act requires all employers to pay, whether they like it or not.

I declared more than once in the House of Commons during 1927 that we would have to obey the new law under compulsion and without respect, and I warned the Government that it was defeating its own purpose eventually by stirring up further anger among Labour voters.

Every society except the Trade Unions enjoys the democratic right of majority rule in this country. Something might perhaps be said for a condition which on grounds of conscience would permit an individual to escape from that rule, and be free of a Union payment under it. But nothing whatever can be said for the unprecedented plan which requires a majority to contract-in to do something instead of enabling the minority to contract-out in order to avoid it.

The talk about protecting the conscience of the minority in such a case is humbug calculated to cloak the real Party purpose of the legislation. The political levy in question is, on an average, about 1d. a month; and no man whose conscience revolts against this payment has ever been known to come forward and decline to receive the multitude of benefits derived by him from its use.

Labour will never retaliate by interfering when in power with the financial support of the Tory Party, because we are not so short-sighted. There are social risks in provoking workmen to strike by crippling them in the use of the Parliamentary weapon, just as there would be in preventing Tories from helping their own men into Parliament.

After the Strike, someone had to be found on whom to fasten the blame for its failure, and who more fitting than the thirty-two men who had formed the General Council of the T.U.C.? A special Conference was called, and a report submitted to it by the Council, recounting the facts of the Strike, and leaving judgment to the Conference.

The report was approved by a proportion of 3 votes to 1.

1927 Mr. Cook, the miners' leader, then had some cutting things to say. Cook was supreme where the drive of an agitator was needed, but not equally sagacious in

Council. I was able to close the debate, amid good feeling, cheers and laughter, with these words : 1927

> " The strike was simply the greatest of all instances of not being able to achieve the impossible. Now we are asked to believe that it was not the instrument itself that was wrong, but it was the thirty-two incompetent men of the General Council. If any other thirty-two men had been put in charge in the place of the General Council, the result would have been the same.
>
> " May I put it in this way. If thirty-two Cooks had been put in the place of the thirty-two men, the only difference would have been that the broth would have been still more spoiled."

The General Strike taught a number of political lessons. Among others, it proved again that the House of Commons is a great repository of unexampled delusions. To hear some of the die-hard Members of the Government speak of us Trade Union leaders after the Strike, one would have imagined that the only place for us was Tower Green, with a firing-squad in close attendance. Yet we were against the stoppage, not in favour of it.

In the Strike, the miners' lock-out—the real cause of it all—had faded into the background. The Cabinet swiftly became the formidable opponents of the Trade Unions. A state approaching martial law was established. The people were enlisted by a call that Labour was threatening constitutional government, and trying to grasp control of State affairs while having no adequate power over its own more unruly elements.

We learned that a national strike could not be used as a weapon in a trade dispute. I think the Government also learned that it was less costly in money and prestige to try to settle such a dispute as that with the miners before things came to such a head that millions of workmen in other trades came out as a spontaneous expression of sympathy.

Politically, Labour realised after 1926 that there is one way, and one only, to alter unfair conditions in

Britain. It is through the ballot-box, and not through violence or resistance.

A lot of political capital was made during the autumn of 1926 by the utterance of wild claims that " the revolutionaries " (whoever they may have been) had suffered defeat at the hands of the Government.

The nation thought otherwise. It had resolutely opposed the Strike action, largely due to being muddled by propaganda, but it soon realised the unfairness of the settlement subsequently forced upon a million miners. It began to return more Labour M.P.s in by-elections.

Reading the signs and portents in the latter part of the year, I said : " Our greater work will soon be begun. The second Labour Government will not be long delayed."

1927 But the Government benches remained sparsely peopled, and nothing important was done. Evidently Mr. Baldwin and his followers felt, as yet, no need for either activity or alarm.

Chapter VII

1926–1929—Government lassitude—Dogs in the manger—The Arcos Raid—A theatrical gesture—Difference between Labour and Communism—The Communist programme—When a Communist opposed me at Platting—A "coming of age" presentation—Death of Asquith—The "Flappers' Bill"—I make an Irish tour—Meeting President Cosgrave—Illness of King George V—The Maxton-Cook Manifesto and its results—Preparing for the 1929 General Election.

In the year following the General Strike, the unemployment position in Britain became worse than it had ever been before. The artificially prosperous conditions which persisted in certain trades for a few years after the War were swiftly changing. Foreign countries were struggling on the edge of bankruptcy; international trade was shrinking; and in England lengthening queues of unemployed waited desolately outside factory gates, which bore the despondent legend: "No more hands wanted."

I spoke in the Commons about the uninterested attitude of the Government in this vital problem. Nearly a quarter of a million miners knew by this time that they would never find work at their old trade again, owing to the closing of mines which did not pay a big enough profit to satisfy the owners. 1927

At one such mine in South Wales, the men offered to work the mine themselves, pay all expenses, and give the owners a percentage of their profits each year. The suggestion was rejected by persons who evidently preferred to keep poor people workless rather than let them share in the natural produce of the earth on which their forebears had lived and toiled for generations. I suppose the owners were rich enough to be able to forgo further profits, so the men had to live on a pound or so a week in rotting idleness, knowing that beneath their feet lay coal they must not touch but which would have given them more food and decent comfort.

That is how revolutionaires are made, not by the words of agitators.

1927 I criticised the Government for spending millions of pounds a year in unemployment pay. " The Conservatives seem to think that their duty is to divert national money by the million to unemployment pay, and that there is nothing else to do. They want to make a dole of it ; they do not try to get rid of unemployment or find work for the workless ; so long as they can proffer some kind of charity, they feel that their job is done ! " I spoke on these lines two or three times, but no Government action was taken.

In May, 1927, a first-class Parliamentary sensation was caused by the Arcos Raid.

A highly confidential document disappeared from the War Office. It was traced to China, where an attempt to get it across the border into Russia failed. Eventually it found its way back again to the All-Russian Co-operative Society's building in Moorgate (known as Arcos), in the heart of the City of London.

A lightning raid was organised by the Special Branch of New Scotland Yard. One day, lorries packed with over one hundred and fifty uniformed and plain-clothes police and detectives came roaring round the corner and drew up outside the Arcos building. Before anyone could question them, policemen were running from room to room, burly detectives had smashed in with pneumatic drills the door of the cypher-room, and a clerk who had been stuffing some documents on to the fire there was arrested. That room was the only one in the building that possessed a fire-place.

Beneath the building, a secret photostat room was discovered. It is said that in this room a photostat copy of the missing document was found.

As to the urgency to trace the document, I can naturally give no opinion, since I do not know its contents. The raid was made with the approval of the Home Secretary of the day ; yet, as a one-time Home Secretary myself, I have the strongest doubts as to the legality of the whole affair, and none at all as to its unwisdom.

It was strongly suggested at the time that the Arcos Raid was staged simply as an excuse to break off all diplomatic and trade relations with Russia, which Labour had renewed with such skill and care in 1924, and which had reduced British unemployment and vastly improved British trade. At any rate, such relations *were* broken off with indecent haste and Government joy, immediately the raid had taken place.

The Home Secretary later stated in the Commons that 1927 the missing document was known to be in the possession of a certain person, an employee of Arcos. If this situation had arisen when I was Home Secretary, I should have instructed the police to arrest that person.

I should certainly not have sent lorry-loads of detectives, armed with burglarious implements, storming suddenly into a City office, smashing doors with picks, frightening girl employees, and burning their way with oxy-acetylene through the walls of private safes, for all the world like a gang of cinema actors making a crime-film !

I wonder what would have happened had I authorised a similar raid, say, on the Fascist headquarters? The Tories would rightly have branded the affair an outrage, and accused me of permitting my sense of drama to run away with me.

Labour Members asked a number of pointed questions about the Arcos Raid, and the Home Secretary twitted me in the House for my objection to its methods. The Government at first parried our inquiries quite idly, but later answered with a growing sense of embarrassment and annoyance, as newspapers throughout the country added incredulous and cynical comments. As usual, a good deal of mud was slung at the Labour cause by those 1927 M.P.s who persist in deliberately or ignorantly mixing the methods and policy of Communism and Labour.

The most paraded part of the stock-in-trade of the Communist Party is an incessant demand for what it calls " Working Class Unity." The Labour Party is constantly being asked to join with them in their various and remarkable activities.

Rebuffs do not deter them. They are resolved to mind anything except their own business. When they do look after their own affairs, the results are disastrous, and next to their appeals for unity there stands very high in their lists the number of their internal quarrels, expulsions, resignations and denunciations of their former " comrades."

In the early days of the Communist Party of this country, I was naturally sympathetic towards them, and inclined to admit them to the Labour Party. Very soon, however, they displayed their preference for foreign authority, and developed the alien methods which have since estranged them from all but a tiny proportion of British voters.

They became anti-Labour, and their sustained hostility towards our Party has been shown with greater virulence than their opposition to capitalism. We have become hardened to their gross misrepresentations, and I have been the target on many occasions of the malicious lies with which they have tried to damage the reputations of Trade Union and Labour leaders. So bad has their conduct been that many libel actions have been undertaken to stay their hand.

If Communism in the sense of community ownership of essentials could be Constitutionally accepted and established in British life, it would make a strong appeal to all of us who are tired of the wasteful competition of the present system. But that is not what the Communists offer us. We are told that it is our duty to accept a Class Dictatorship, excused because it is to be backed by masses of workers instead of by masses of capitalists. To my mind, Dictatorship in any form in Britain would be as hateful and ruinous as ever any other Dictatorship has ultimately proved in the history of other countries of the world. 1927

The Communist plan is to grasp control of the Army, the Law, the Press, the Schools, Banks, Land, Railways, Industries, Money and Goods. Property is to be taken over without a penny of compensation to the present owners. Those who resist or complain can do so at their peril.

Manual workers would then be promised a minimum weekly wage of £4 a week, with a seven-hour day and a five-day week. Unity and Federation (whatever that may mean) with the Soviet Union of Russia is to be established, and the League of Nations is to be repudiated as a Capitalist Institution ! This last item was announced just before the Russian Government joined the League ; apparently the shock caused by that move has not yet resulted in any revised policy, though it has perhaps added fresh causes of dispute between Comrades of various shades of scarlet.

No one with common sense can read a Communist programme without a mixture of amusement and amazement. But the methods by which the programme is to be secured are not amusing.

Physical force operating through the armed forces of the country is to be the chief method of converting British citizens into contented Reds. Those who do not agree are to be subject to a process for removing all critics and leaving an entirely friendly (though doubtless much shrunken) population. Every man who owned a little house, and every woman with a few pounds in the Savings Bank, would naturally object to such a policy ; in the words of Lenin, it would be necessary to indulge in " bloodshed on a colossal scale."

An example of the Communist outlook towards the men who have worked for a generation to forge a fair political weapon for the working-classes, may be judged from the following statement by Mr. Thomas Bell, Editor of the *Communist Review :*

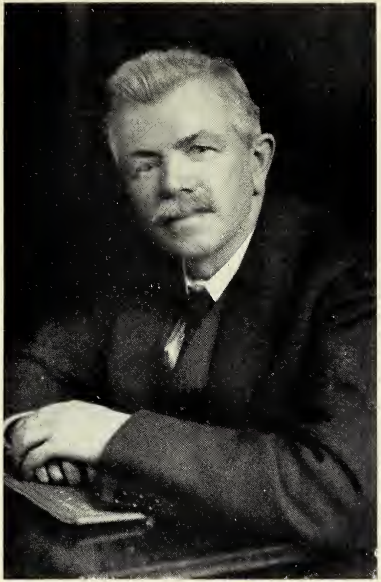
> " The Communists must not content themselves with saying that Messrs. MacDonald, Henderson and Clynes are ' Twisters and Fakers.' That is understood. But they must crystallize their views into definite political opposition to the Labour Government . . ."

On another occasion the Communist Party issued a leaflet denouncing a famous Labour leader as " A man with no principles, domineering, a petty intriguer and Foreign Office tout."

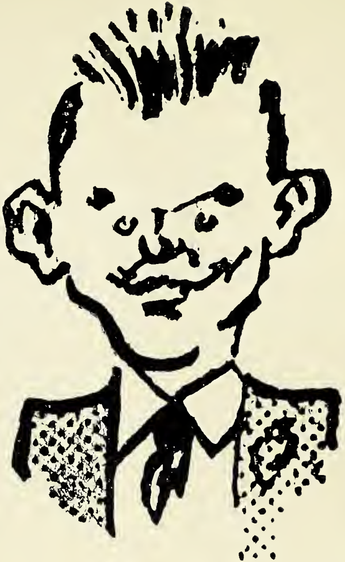
This is the real treatment we get from the Communists with whom we are deliberately confused by our other political opponents. Communist talk and tactics have for years been the most precious possession of the Parliamentary forces ranged against British Labour. Whenever the Communists applaud some absurd foreign idea, that idea is promptly fastened upon us by the Tories, as though it were our official label. The Arcos Raid, the Zinovieff Letter and many another bit of political perversion has been successful in temporarily ruining our chances because of this sort of lying propaganda against us.

For many years, the Labour Party has refused by an overwhelming majority to allow a Communist to carry our endorsement as a candidate for Parliament or for a Local Authority. Men who deny the policy and methods of Labour should keep away from it, or be kept away from it.

1927 Labour believes in Parliamentary action as a constructive force, directed by elected Members who represent the majority of the democracy. Communism, on its own admission, believes in destructive work with the object of setting up a class dictatorship. Our weapon is the ballot-box, theirs the rifle. We believe that an army exercising a domination of tyranny on behalf of a wealthy class is no worse than an army holding down the rich on behalf of the poor, and we do not propose to use



MR. CLYNES AS HE REALLY IS



MR. CLYNES AS DRAWN IN THE COMMUNIST PRESS AFTER THE GENERAL STRIKE

an instrument which we should violently denounce if others employed it.

British Labour M.P.s have suffered a good deal of active opposition from the Communists with whose deeds the Tories have so often been anxious to saddle us. 1927

Once, I was opposed by a Communist in one of my Parliamentary fights in the Platting Division. He polled 400 votes to my 23,000. I did not mention his name throughout the contest, for I could well afford to ignore the vulgarities and personal abuse in which he traded. He forfeited his deposit, and thereafter troubled me no more. But no one who was present during that Election campaign would ever have believed subsequently that Labour and Communism were one !

The differences between us were emphasised recently in my case when a Communist M.P. published a book which contained some remarkable statements. My attention was drawn to two points of fact in it which raised questions as to my honesty.

In one place, referring to the special one-day Labour Party Conference held after the War, it states :

> " The Labour Party decided to finish with the Coalition. Clynes refused to accept the decision, and went to his Union to try to get its support in opposition to the Labour Party. Only when his Union turned him down did he reluctantly sever his connection with the Government."

These statements are all false. In actual fact, I said to the Council of the Union :

> " I cannot conceive myself as other than a Labour man, and I believe I can do greater service to Labour by being out of the Government than in it."

The records of what I said still remain, and the Communist M.P. was told he could inspect them. Other records produced in reply to these attacks show that more than once I refused positions carrying with them salaries several times greater than my Trade Union pay. On November 21st, 1919, I sent my Union a letter informing them of one such position, with a salary of £1,500, rising to £2,000. I stated that I had refused to accept it.

In another part of the book, this passage occurs :

> " Clynes came to the Conference with a message from Lloyd George pleading to keep the Labour Party in the Government."

This is also utterly false. I brought no message from Lloyd George, who did not even know I was going to the Conference. It was my personal view that Labour ought to take a hand in making a peace which would affect the future of millions of labouring men, and time has shown how sound my view was ! I could, of course, force an apology from this author, but I have never thought a forced apology worth having !

Following the Arcos Raid, our Tory opponents who tried to say, as usual, that we were all Communists rather over-reached themselves, and after a few days any reference to the Raid was received with slight self-consciousness by leading members of the Government.

While the Arcos affair was before the Commons, I took part in a much more pleasing little ceremony, when a tea-party was given to over one thousand guests at Belle Vue, Manchester, to celebrate my having spent twenty-one years in an unbroken period of Parliamentary service for that division.

1927 Among the guests were many I had known in my days in the mill. Alderman Tom Fox and Alderman W. T. Jackson were there—both had helped me in my first election campaign in Manchester. Tom Fox later became Lord Mayor of the City.

My friend Bernard Shaw sent me a volume of his collected plays, with an inscription in *St. Joan* which ran as follows :

> " The author of these plays claims the privilege of inscribing them to you with his own hand as an old friend. This particular volume is between Mrs. Clynes and myself, but we will not grudge you your share in it."

I was also presented with a Founder's Certificate of the Independent Labour Party ; and when a gold bracelet watch was given to Mrs. Clynes, the audience rose and sang : " She's a jolly good fellow."

We had been factory boy and girl together among the people who surrounded us that day, and it was a reward to us for many trials and discouragements to find that our own folk thus appreciated our efforts in the political world to do what we could in their interests.

I had then fought that constituency successfully six times—four straight fights against Conservative opponents, and two " three-cornered " contests. Twice I had been returned unopposed. Whatever lay ahead of me, I had already learned how deep was the loyalty that Labour could give to its chosen representatives.

The months passed, and nothing of importance was done in Parliament. It seemed as if the Conservative Government was merely waiting for the next election. The Members who attended debates at all took little interest in them. 1927

During 1927, Lord Oxford and Asquith died. Since his open disagreement with Lloyd George a few months before, he had failed to arrive at any clear line of Liberal policy, and since his death the position has never been completely repaired.

A great debater, a brilliant tactician and skilful Party leader, he just failed to be a statesman of the first magnitude. His grasp on foreign affairs was never that of a great man. In moments of crisis, his acute sense of fairness made him " Wait and See," while less scrupulous men grasped the lead, and perhaps turned their following towards worse ends. The Liberals, whom he had helped to make powerful, deserted him in the end for more colourful generals ; now they are scattered.

At least it may be said of Asquith that he never stooped to unworthy weapons ; his worst opponents had to admit that he was a true gentleman. He placed Labour in power for the first time, despite hysterical opposition from many of his own supporters, because he thought that it was the country's will, and for that alone millions of workers should remember his name with appreciation.

As Deputy Leader of the Labour Party in the Commons, I found that my work kept me very busy. I had to help to form the Party's policy there and in the constituencies, and prepare the ground for the next General Election, which I felt confident by this time would turn in favour of Labour.

One of the Government measures to which we gave an unqualified support was the extension of the franchise to women over the age of twenty-one. For the previous ten years, votes had been granted to women over thirty, and to men over twenty-one, and Labour Members had often drawn attention to this glaring unfairness.

Indeed, we had always favoured full franchise for women, even in the early years of this century, and it will be recalled how Mrs. Pankhurst and other Suffragettes spoke in my interests during my first election campaign.

But when, in 1928, the Tories themselves introduced a Bill to legalise what was called the " Flappers' Vote," indignant protests came from some of the occupants of the Government benches. They said that all young women were Labour supporters, as though that in itself showed them unfit to vote ; and one Tory M.P. asked
1928 for the rejection of the Bill because he said it would give men less numerical voting power than women—apparently a most improper result. When the votes were counted, however, it was found that only nine M.P.s had voted against the Bill, and that six million young women had thus been given the power to help to direct the fate of their country.

The Parliamentary session of 1928 opened gloomily. Unemployment figures were still rising with dreadful persistence, while the Government looked hopelessly on. The country was going from bad to worse under the Tory rule, but somehow it dragged out a miserable Parliamentary existence until May, 1929.

Its fall was postponed for several months by the dangerous illness of George V with pleurisy. Until His Majesty was out of all danger, no one wanted to arouse abnormal conditions in Britain.

During the summer of 1928, Frank Hodges and myself, accompanied by our wives, took a short holiday in Ireland. I had not been in the country of my origin since 1913, when I paid a visit there to try to settle a Labour dispute and to study further the Irish Question.

We visited Belfast, the Giants' Causeway, Londonderry, Donegal, Sligo and Westport. Then we went through Connemara, Galway and Clare to Killarney.

It was delightful indeed idly watching the ripples break on the wooded shores of the Irish lake, and as I had not had many real holidays for the past few years I enjoyed it the more. It was a great change from the dusty sunlight of the House of Commons, the gloomy magnificence of Downing Street, or the atmosphere of relentless eagerness at the Labour headquarters.

In Dublin we visited Trinity College, and later had a long talk with President Cosgrave on the situation between his country and Britain. We lunched with the Governor-General at the Vice-Regal Lodge, and stayed for a few days in Dublin, enjoying the city amusements. 1928

I was impressed during the whole tour with the vast programme of new work going on in road reconstruction and railways, and with the improvement of the hotels, while the Civic Guard, the world's youngest police force, seemed the epitome of courtesy and efficiency.

Back in England again, we found the Tory Government still existing and doing very little. The King's Speech at the beginning of the 1929 session was uninspiring, being chiefly concerned with a few unimportant proposals, and with self-congratulations concerning relations, which in reality were then anything but satisfactory.

Most of us could already clearly see a world financial crisis slowly approaching, and spoke of it often, but to deaf ears.

By this time King George V's health was very much more satisfactory. During a great part of his illness he had been unable to attend to his duties, and a rather interesting departure was taken in the setting up of a Council of State to attend to these for him.

The Council consisted of Queen Mary, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor. Before this Council could operate, His Majesty had to approve its activities, but he was so ill when it was set up that it was some days before he could sign the necessary document giving it authority.

When it met, the Queen sat while the rest stood. Notes concerning State business were read aloud, and Her Majesty either said " Approved ! " or, in more serious matters, left them to be discussed until a general decision was reached.

In order to attend the Council, the Prince of Wales came back hot-foot from the heart of the African jungle, were he was enjoying a shooting expedition. He had gone there with the special ambition of bagging a lion. He travelled nearly seven thousand miles homewards in fourteen days, by rail, sea and air—about the fastest journey any royal person has ever made.

He was gravely anxious about his father's condition, and was ill at ease when at last he was shown to the royal bedside, where the King lay pale and wasted, a shadow of his former self.

Yet, as the Prince tip-toed across the carpet, the invalid turned his head and said feebly : " Well, David, did you get that lion ? "

In the spring of 1929, unemployment gave grave concern. Half our greatest industries were already partly crippled, and thousands of British ships lay rusting in the docks for lack of cargoes.

1929 Finally, Mr. Baldwin announced that the Dissolution would take place in May. Mr. Lloyd George, now the spiritual if not the actual leader of the Liberals, immediately proclaimed a sensational election programme, particularly with regard to unemployment, using measures discreetly stolen from Labour's book. But no one took very much notice.

I had my own work to do preparing a Labour Election plan, and getting into touch with the various Party representatives throughout the country. This time we meant to go back with a majority.

A few months earlier we had watched with interest while the Maxton–Cook manifesto flamed through the 1929 country. Arthur Cook, having learned no lesson from the General Strike, was once more demanding what he termed "vigorous action," and had joined James Maxton and others of the Clydeside group in drawing up a strongly worded document. It was intended to herald a number of conferences throughout Britain between the Maxton–Cook alliance and Labour rank and file, and it calmly claimed "thirty years of devoted work."

However, it was but a damp squib after all. It was received with extreme coldness; so much so, in fact, that the proposed conferences never took place. The only result was to demonstrate once more the remarkable solidarity and loyalty of the Labour voters, and their common sense in rejecting the proposed fireworks compounded of the uncertain powders of enthusiasm and sentiment, in favour of the steady illumination of the actual records of those M.P.s who since 1906 had been Labour's authorised leaders.

It was a good sign for the 1929 General Election, and I think it helped materially to show our voters the way towards a second Labour Government.

Chapter VIII

1929—General Election campaign—Labour in office a second time—A Party misfortune—Second Labour Cabinet—I become Home Secretary—First woman Cabinet Minister—The Royal Seals—Proportional representation—Labour work for peace—I ban Trotsky from England—Early work of the Labour Government—Beginning work at the Home Office—Examining petitions to the King—Varied duties—Attending His Majesty at public ceremonies.

During the years that elapsed between the fall of the first British Labour Government and the 1929 General Election, our political opponents fought us mercilessly in and out of Parliament. They had confidently expected political Labour to write its own death-warrant while in office. Instead, we did so well that it was necessary to get us out by means of a strategic move of the most questionable sort—the Campbell case affair.

While we were in Opposition, we were never allowed to forget the slanders used against us in connection with the Zinoviev forgery and the Arcos Raid theatricalities.

During the 1929 Election campaign, these old libels were raked up again. The Red Bogy Man was dragged from his restless grave and sent dancing through the country, hand in hand with a scarecrow Tory travesty of the Capital Levy ; and with these spectres Britain was threatened if she dared to return Labour once more in force to Westminster.

1929 Thousands of posters bearing Mr. Baldwin's picture and the half-hearted legend, " Safety First," decorated hoardings from Land's End to John o' Groats. It is said that more was spent by the Conservatives on this Election than on any before or since.

Just before polling day, one of the most famous Tory speakers declared confidently: " The Labour Party has passed its zenith." The newspapers and the betting-men on the Stock Exchange offered long odds in favour of another Conservative majority. 1929

For the first time in political history, each of the three Parties was given the opportunity of addressing the electors by radio.

In Manchester, my own election campaign went smoothly towards its climax. Many of the mill-workers who had temporarily left their jobs and pay to help me in my first election fight there in 1906 now became my most valuable allies. They were older than when I first knew them, but the years had only added to their enthusiasm and their appetite for an election contest.

They carried my standard to victory, as they had never yet failed to do since I first entered the political battle-ground.

The successful result of my election was conveyed to me as I waited among massed crowds of Manchester workmen. We were excited and pleased, but our delight was swiftly carried higher by news that left many of us gasping.

Labour was winning all along the line.

Ben Tillett, then Chairman of the T.U.C., scored his first election victory. Two other Salford seats were won by Labour. In Birmingham, the Tory Minister of Labour was defeated, and Austen Chamberlain went within forty-three votes of defeat—yet Birmingham had hitherto been considered an impregnable Conservative stronghold and a Chamberlain family certainty.

The North, South and West swung over almost solidly to us. The big industrial towns returned man after man from our side.

All through that night, Labour songs were punctuated with cheer after cheer, which went spreading outwards through Manchester in echoing waves of sound, as fresh results were flashed on the electric sign, telling the watching crowds of new Labour gains.

When all the results were in at last, it was found that the Labour Party, which had polled a little over 300,000 votes in 1906 when I entered the Commons for the first time, had now gathered nearly eight and a half million votes, which sent 288 of our candidates to Westminster.

The Conservatives, who had held 400 seats in the old House, were reduced to 260 ; and 58 Liberals held the balance of power—a pitiful and mischievous remnant of a once-powerful Party, whose only use in 1929 was that of an unwilling tool with which the Tories were later able to prune all our best efforts at Westminster.

We little knew what was in store for us !

One of the greatest misfortunes that has ever befallen British Labour was that it was returned at that time to govern England, and that then as before it did not possess a proper majority to force its measures through the House of Commons. We were like a long-distance runner who finds, in the event, that he has a heavy weight (in our case, the Liberals) chained to his leg. In such circumstances, the chance of making a fine record is a poor one.

We faced a period of rule subject to Liberal permission. We had to wait their nod before we could do anything worth while. Moreover, we had to face the worst political mess that this country has ever known ; unprecedented unemployment, the verge of a world financial crisis, and foreign relations that were as strained as they had ever been since 1914.

1929 Mr. Baldwin resigned and left us to it on June 4th, and George V sent for Ramsay MacDonald.

The Labour leader, in forming his Cabinet, did not attempt a second time to undertake personally the duties of both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. He had discovered in 1924 that such dual posts were too much for the powers of any man.

In the distribution of Cabinet seats, I was asked to accept the position of Home Secretary. The Cabinet consisted of the following Members :

MISS BONDFIELD (FIRST WOMAN CABINET MINISTER) WITH MR. AND MRS. CLYNES DISCUSSING THE 1929 GENERAL ELECTION RESULTS

Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury : Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald.
Lord President of the Council : Rt. Hon. Lord Parmoor.
Chancellor of the Exchequer : Rt. Hon. Philip Snowden.
Lord Privy Seal : Rt. Hon. J. H. Thomas.
Lord High Chancellor : Rt. Hon. Lord Sankey.
Secretary of State for Home Affairs : Rt. Hon. J. R. Clynes.
Secretary of State for War : Rt. Hon. T. Shaw.
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs : Rt. Hon. Arthur Henderson.
Secretary of State for Colonies : Rt. Hon. Lord Passfield.
Secretary of State for India : Rt. Hon. J. Wedgwood Benn.
Secretary of State for Air : Rt. Hon. Lord Thomson.
Secretary of State for Scotland : Rt. Hon. W. Adamson.
Minister of Health : Rt. Hon. A. Greenwood.
First Lord of the Admiralty : Rt. Hon. A. Alexander.
President of the Board of Trade : Rt. Hon. W. Graham.
President of the Board of Education : Rt. Hon. Sir C. Trevelyan.
Minister of Labour : Rt. Hon. Margaret Grace Bondfield.
Minister of Agriculture : Rt. Hon. Noel Buxton.
First Commissioner of Works : Rt. Hon. G. Lansbury.

One of the most interesting personalities in the new Cabinet was Margaret Bondfield, our new Minister of Labour. She was the first woman ever to reach Cabinet rank and to become a Privy Councillor of the King of England. 1929

Miss Bondfield was working as a schoolteacher when she was but thirteen years old. She began her real career in the world " living in " in a draper's shop in the provinces, where she learned bitterly at first-hand the evils of the living-in system of those days, with its fines, bad food, low wages, long hours and intolerable tyrannies.

For many years she served as an official of the Shop Assistants' Union, and was an active speaker and writer on Labour subjects. The 1929 Election was the first in our history in which women possessed full suffrage powers, and it was only appropriate, therefore, that a woman Cabinet Minister qualified for high office should be appointed.

1929 In my new position as Home Secretary, I took charge of the second of the three Royal Seals of this country. I had been keeper of the Privy Seal in 1924. The third, known as the Great Seal, confers his powers on the Lord Chancellor. The Home Secretary's Seal is what is known as the Royal Signet.

When any of these Seals is renewed, as on the occasion of a monarch's death, it was at one time an understood practice that the holders of the Seals at the time retain the old ones as perquisites of their offices. They are usually kept as family heirlooms, though not long ago one was sold to America (not by a Labour man) for £3,255.

The Great Seal is part of the Lord Chancellor's equipment when he sits on the Woolsack. The Seal is never supposed to go out of his keeping, and there is a tradition that it is taken to bed to conform to this rule.

Some years ago, when Lord Eldon's house caught fire in the night, His Lordship seized the Great Seal and ran out into the darkness. Everything was shouting and confusion, and in his anxiety for the Seal he carried, Lord Eldon quickly dug a hole with his fingers in a flower-bed, and buried it there till the medley was lessened.

When, however, he went to search for it later, he could not find it. After some comprehensive digging, he called in his wife and children to help him, but even then it was some time before the Great Seal of England was found. Lord Eldon wrote to a friend later :—

> " You never saw anything so ridiculous as the whole family down that garden, walking, probing and digging, till we found it."

When the House met, the Liberals took the first opportunity to raise a cry which has been popular with them since the War—that legislation should be introduced to return M.P.s by what is called Proportional Representation. Briefly, this system would mean that each Party returned to Parliament a number of members proportionate to its total vote in a General Election.

In the 1929 Election, the Liberals polled a total vote of about five and a quarter millions, against the eight and a half millions each of Labour and Tory. On such a showing, by Proportional Representation, they would have returned about 150 Members ; but in actual fact they had only a few over 50.

It has sometimes happened that a Party with the biggest total of votes has not been returned to office because, in a number of seats in densely populated cities, losing candidates have polled thousands more votes than winning candidates did elsewhere.

The great changes which Proportional Representation would mean to our present election routine have so far prevented any attempt at introducing the system, though it seems more truly democratic, but there is great doubt on whether the country would stand to gain by it.

The first meetings of the new Labour Cabinet were concerned with the problem of world peace. MacDonald met General Dawes, the new United States Ambassador to England, and within a month the Prime Minister was able to tell the House of Commons that work on the building of two new British naval cruisers had been stopped, and that orders for two new submarines and a submarine depot-ship had been cancelled. 1929

Immediately, President Hoover postponed the building of three of the five cruisers ordered in the U.S. Navy programme, and continental nations eased down the naval armaments race which had threatened to rival that of 1911–14.

This is not the only example completely refuting the bellicose arguments of those British politicians who say that if Britain stops arming, others will redouble their armaments at sight of our weakness.

Almost immediately after my appointment as Home Secretary, I had to deal with a case which caused me a good deal of thought. I received an application from Lev Trotsky to allow him to reside in Britain, and his claim was pressed by many of his friends, some of whom I knew as political colleagues.

The name of Trotsky was then already familiar to most people in this country. He had not then figured in any of the great Soviet Trials, though since that date a number of famous Russians have been executed because of their attempts to reinstate him at the head of the Soviet regime.

1929 After long consideration, I refused Trotsky permission to come to England. The result was a chorus of frantic personal abuse, not from Trotsky himself, but from ill-informed persons who accused me of forgetting our traditions, and who would admit anyone exiled from his own land.

More absurd ground for their complaints it would have been hard to find. I had never previously had anything to do with Trotsky, and knew nothing beyond what the newspapers told me. But the Labour Government in which I served wished to re-establish relations with Russia, and Trotsky was expelled from Russia under deep suspicion of his former Soviet colleagues.

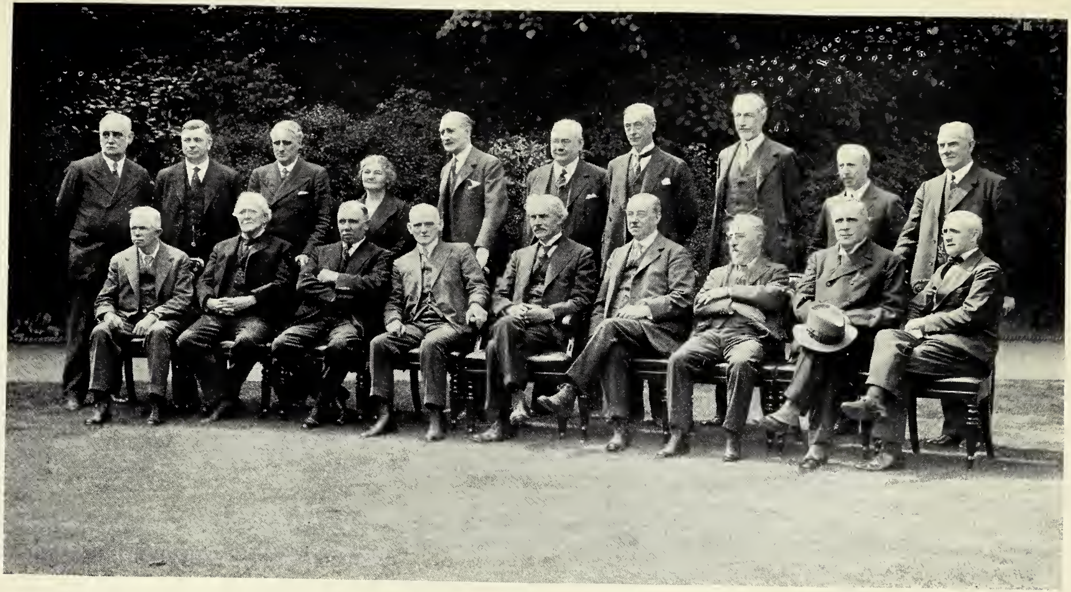
That this suspicion was justified seems to have been proved by the recent plot to make him Dictator.

Had I admitted him here, there was not the slightest guarantee that he would not use this country as a base from which safely to pursue his plans against the Soviet Government. I should, in fact, have been welcoming someone whose activities they feared and resented.

This man had stood like a conqueror beside Lenin in the earlier stages of the Russian Revolution. The Soviet did not wish him to use Britain as a shield until such time as he could enter Russia as a conqueror once more.

Punch published an amusing cartoon at the time, showing me turning Trotsky from the door despite his claim to be " a friend of the house." He is an embarrassing person to harbour in any country.

As soon as we had had time to settle into our new positions, a progressive Labour policy was shaped. We planned an extension in housing and slum-clearance, a speeding-up of electrification, reorganisation of the



THE LABOUR CABINET, 1929

arterial road system of the country, afforestation and encouragement of the depressed industries. Iron, steel, textiles, engineering, mining and shipping were all in a bad state ; to these we turned our attention.

These things, it was believed, would lighten unemployment. We also decided to raise the school-leaving age, to prevent the influx to the labour market of inadequately educated and untrained children who would have been better off at school.

Particular work was arranged to stimulate the production of coal by-products, so as to help the mining industry. Little was said about this work at the time, but it has gone steadily on since 1929, and is creating a bigger demand for poor-grade coal every year.

In foreign relations, we decided to give our full 1929
support to the League of Nations, which had weakened considerably since 1924 because of the obvious lack of interest in it evinced by the Conservatives. Britain has always been the League's chief champion and hope ; it waxes and wanes—and with it the probability of world peace—exactly as the British Labour power rises or falls at home.

Our proposals, outlined in the King's Speech of July, 1929, were met with steady enthusiasm throughout the country. Even newspapers opposed to us greeted our advent to office ; everyone was sick of the former Government and its policy of idleness.

For my part, I found that my work at the Home Office kept me intensely busy.

Of all departments of State work, I would ever prefer duties at the Home Office. I confess, however, that when I accepted the post, I thought mainly that here was a new opportunity for Labour service. I did not realise how often I should have sleepless nights ahead of me, spent studying masses of documents, or pacing to and fro in my study weighing last-minute evidence which might send some poor wretch to the gallows.

I doubt whether any other Minister has to handle such a variety of subjects as does the Home Secretary. The signing of documents alone is a real burden, which I refused to endure beyond a certain point. The time of "His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State" ought to be better spent than in putting his name personally on hundreds of multi-tinted forms concerning trivial conventionalities, or having to certify from his own knowledge that a particular alien has been granted facilities for naturalisation.

Years ago, when departmental work was lighter, these things may have been possible. But I reached a stage where I had to insist on several considerable reforms, to lighten routine duties which became intolerable and prevented me from playing my full part in more important human concerns.

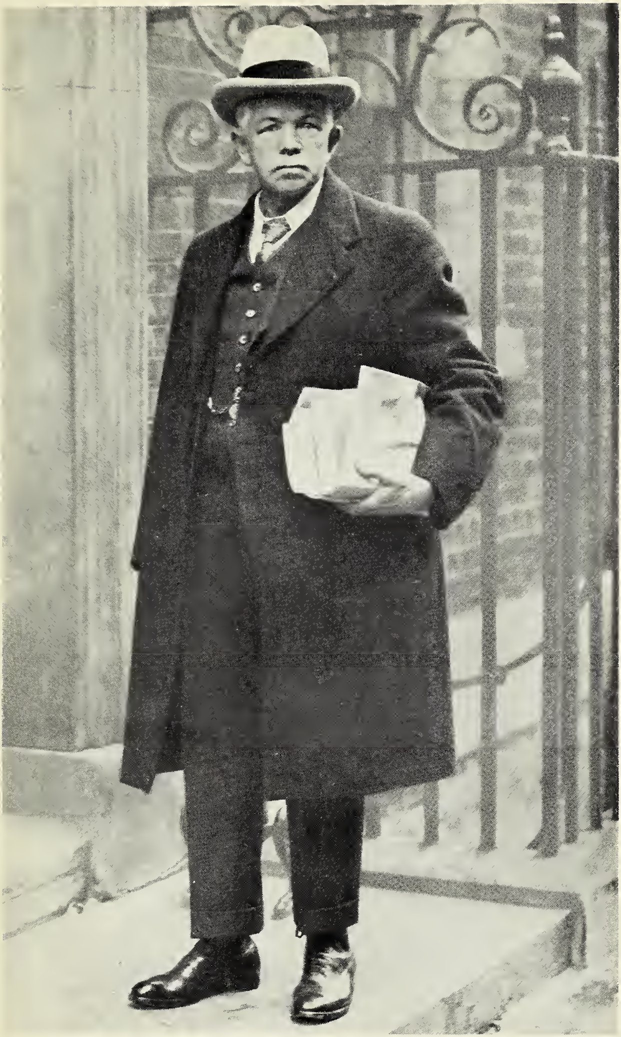
Every day meant attendance at conferences, consultations and meetings, varying from a talk with an individual visitor to the Home Office to receiving important deputations from some of the greatest interests in the land.

1929 I had to answer a huge variety of questions in the Commons, where the Home Secretary is a figure for all sorts of discontented persons to abuse. Were some person wrongfully arrested, it was laid at my door. If the parish hall in a distant village got into disrepair, some Honourable Gentleman jumped to his feet at an inopportune moment and asked if I were aware of this scandal.

No alien was deported, no factory accident occurred, no public house lost its licence without my experiencing a sensation of uneasiness lest some zealous Member should thunder invective against me because of it.

I had to answer questions in the House on such subjects as drugs, Communism, juvenile employment, alien marriages, special schools, prison discipline, night clubs, the quality of beer, sweepstakes, police prosecutions, street cries, policewomen, book censorship, factory hours, and a host of other matters—such a variety, in fact, that no one man could be an expert in them all.

I studied the subjects, digested masses of statistics,



THE HOME SECRETARY ARRIVING AT NO. 10 FOR A CABINET MEETING

interviewed representatives, and did what I could; but I was always open to attacks in the House by real experts in any particular matter, or—worse still—by Members who wanted to be troublesome and who had nothing better to do than make an intensive research of some obscure centre of pointless criticism.

Part of my work was connected with problems of education. I was interested in examining the records of schools in my native Lancashire. I found old copies of certificates granted less than one hundred years ago to children of eight and ten years old, enabling them to leave school and take up night-work in foul and ill-ventilated factories. Once there, they were kept at work for ten or twelve or more hours at a time, and then staggered home to sleep.

Their teachers must have been an ignorant lot. Indeed, one batch of papers concerned a woman teacher who had infringed some law or other by giving a certificate which involved an even greater degree of child slavery than the authorities of those days could allow.

The teacher, who was in charge of a Lancashire school, escaped all consequences of her act because she proved—that she could neither read nor write, and had therefore granted the certificate in ignorance of its contents.

It might have been a death warrant for all she knew!

One of the chief responsibilities of my new office was 1929
that all petitions and addresses to the King were first sent to me for examination and sorting.

It is the Home Secretary's task to advise the King on such State affairs. Equally, it is his uncertain privilege to take the blame if anything goes amiss, for "the King can do no wrong."

Again, he may be the link between the King and the Church—a position of extreme delicacy, and one that has sometimes in the past caused Home Secretaries great difficulties in certain discussions.

Fortunately for me, my own tasks in these matters were made easy by the genial, kindly, considerate personality of George V, a truly Constitutional monarch who always put the will of his people nearest his heart.

The Home Secretary is the police authority of London, and at times supervisor of outside police affairs. He is responsible for reformatories and prisons of all sorts. On his advice, the King appoints Stipendiary Magistrates and Recorders, and a number of other semi-legal officials.

Factories, shops, explosives, aliens, fire-brigades, public morals, special duties connected with the islands round our coasts—all come within the jurisdiction of the Home Office.

I found that I had sometimes a hundred formal documents to sign every day, even after I had cut down the greater number they wished to present to me. I had many letters to write, and much departmental routine to supervise or direct. Murder appeals were handed to me for consideration, and I shall describe that side of my work in detail later.

1929 Parliamentary questions sometimes numbered twenty-five a day. Many were unimportant, but some were searching and vital, and a slip in an answer might perhaps have cost the Government its existence.

In addition, I had to attend official lunches and dinners very frequently, attend at Court at most big royal or public functions, meet distinguished visitors, and be present when knights received the accolade.

I had to attend Cabinets at No. 10, and make many suggestions there as to the Home policy of the Government. When we were preparing a Home Office Bill for presentation in the Commons, I was particularly busy smoothing out its way and trying to foresee all questions and opposition.

At public ceremonies such as the opening of new buildings, I had to wait on the King, receive the royal address from the King's hands, and hand him the reply address from the officials who were receiving us.

On such occasions, a somewhat embarrassing situation sometimes arose when driving through the streets of a town with Their Majesties to a public ceremony. It invariably happened that the crowds vociferously cheered the royal pair, and the King and Queen responded graciously as was their custom.

But I, as Home Secretary, could not acknowledge any of the acclamation; even when some light-hearted person in the mob shouted: " Good old Clynes ! " I had to sit like a statue lest it seemed that I was trying to accept tribute that was offered to Their Majesties !

Now and again, this resulted in a good-humoured shout 1929 of comment from an irrepressible workman, and I shall not soon forget how a brawny labourer whose echoing tribute to me had passed unacknowledged swiftly added to it a criticism of some recent speech of mine. The topicality and wit of the remark caused King George to smile and quote something which astonished me, since I had no idea that he had ever heard of the particular speech at all.

Chapter IX

1929–30—The Lord Lloyd sensation—A rebuke to Churchill—Opening Imber Court—Home Office work to prevent occupational diseases—Visits to works and factories—Above the Battersea power-station—Evacuation of the Rhineland—Work at Geneva—What the League of Nations stands for—My work against lotteries leads to trouble—The Five-Power Naval Conference—Working while travelling—Visitors at the Home Office.

Before we had been in office many weeks, one of the troubles our predecessors had left to us to solve came to a head.

For some time the British Foreign Office had been trying to establish a friendship with Egypt that was free from hectoring or patronage on our side and from fear on the side of the Egyptians. But we found that the High Commissioner in Egypt, Lord Lloyd, did not share our views.

After considerable experience of the Near East, he stated clearly and often that the only way to serve British interests in Egypt was to adopt a policy of the strong hand. When we suggested something more conciliatory, he was not amenable. As he continued to prove a stumbling-block to our policy, it was decided to seek his resignation, which was tendered and accepted.

1929 When this was announced in the House of Commons in July, the Tories attacked the Government like a pack of wolves. Dozens of questions were asked, and all sorts of accusations were levelled at us. Mr. Churchill was particularly pointed in his remarks, while Lord Birkenhead and others in the House of Lords arrogantly demanded a full explanation.

A full-dress debate followed in the Commons, in which Mr. Baldwin led his side against us. But facts were laid before the House which showed that not only did Lord Lloyd disagree with us, but that he had for some three years previously opposed important Government suggestions for Egyptian policy, which suggestions emanated not from us alone but from the Tories who now chiefly supported him.

Foreign Office records were produced to show that Lord Lloyd had ignored Austen Chamberlain in 1926 in the matter of the Egyptian Premiership, that they had disagreed twice on other matters in 1927 (on one of which occasions we had to send battleships to Egypt), and again in 1928 and early 1929. When further friction arose after Mr. Henderson had replaced Sir Austen Chamberlain as Foreign Secretary, it was felt better to substitute a man in Egypt who could work more harmoniously with Government policy.

In the main, the House was satisfied with the explanations. But Mr. Churchill was irrepressible. He jumped to his feet and said that the Labour Government was terrifying our overseas representatives, and personally accused the Foreign Secretary of taking improper steps to obtain information against Lord Lloyd. 1929

After listening to him to the end, the Prime Minister rose and uttered one of the most severe rebukes I have ever heard issued in the House to a responsible Member. MacDonald said :

> " It is almost impossible to exaggerate the mischievous character of his speech. Himself once a Minister of the Crown, himself a past member of the Cabinet, Mr. Churchill has made a most unjustifiable attack on the Civil Service, and has based that attack not on personal experience but on the most contemptible tittle-tattle which every man who frequents clubs and such places can pick up by the armful."

The case brought forward by the Government was eventually so overwhelming that it left nothing more to be said of one of the major political sensations of recent years.

Since that time, the Labour policy in Egypt has been completely vindicated. The substitution of friendship and co-operation for the former threatening attitude of " the mailed fist beneath the velvet glove " has been continued, and was strikingly justified following Italy's conquest of Abyssinia, when Egypt stood uncompromisingly shoulder to shoulder with us and resolutely refused to allow any Italian penetration along the Nile.

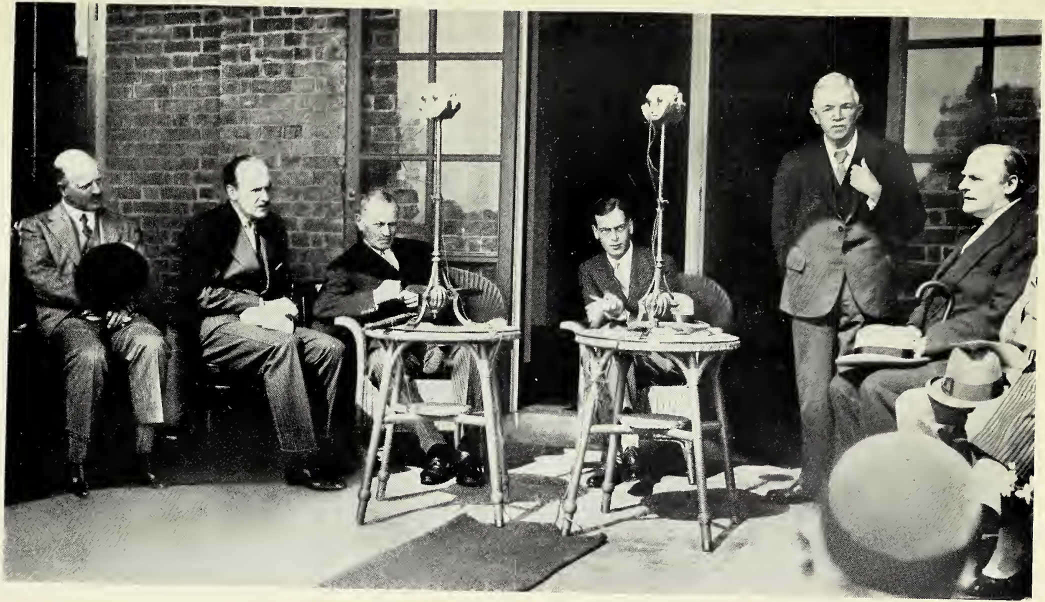
Had Egypt feared and disliked us in 1935 as she did in 1928, Mussolini's men could have marched from Lake Tana to Alexandria unless stayed by unsupported British force—the Egyptians would have greeted them as liberators. Instead, by recognising Egypt's rights in 1929, British Labour averted what might have become a major war in 1935.

Before I had been long at the Home Office, it fell to my lot to assist at the opening of Imber Court, the new police training and recreation centre. It was an imposing place, and I was glad to see it, as I think from what I learned of them during this time that the police in Britain get inadequate recognition for the splendid service they give.

1929 Imber Court was officially opened by Prince George, and Lord Byng of Vimy was also present. This was the first time I had any conversation with the Prince, though I had met most other members of the Royal Family. I found him pleasant and considerate, and perhaps more like his father than any of the other Princes.

When I became Home Secretary, I was most anxious to extend the usefulness of my new department in relation to industrial diseases and to the prevention of accidents. As a workman myself, I knew something of the darker side of my subject.

I could well remember, for example, the indelible impression left upon me by seeing, in my younger days, men and women who were terribly disfigured and were



MR. CLYNES SPEAKING AT THE OPENING OF IMBER COURT. PRINCE GEORGE (*centre*) WITH THE LATE LORD BYNG OF VIMY ON HIS RIGHT

actually dying on their feet from what was commonly called "Potter's Rot," and I had known painters who lived in constant agony from "Painter's Colic," caused by arsenical poisoning.

In recent years, to take another occupation, there were nearly one thousand colliers killed at work every year, and some two hundred thousand injured.

If the public who benefit from such labour knew one half of the dreadful toll in human life and health taken every year so as to supply some of their commonplace and unconsidered luxuries, they might regard with horror certain details of their homes.

Much has been done to list and combat the diseases of occupation, and to ensure workmen's compensation to victims or their relatives. The Trade Unions wage a ceaseless struggle in this way, and the public is becoming educated to understand that a man who falls in peaceful industrial service of his fellows is just as deserving of compensation as a professional soldier who retires after a lifetime of barrack-room militarism. But even to-day thousands of workpeople are inadequately protected, and suffer from diseases due to their work.

Changes in method, material and machinery, and most of all the ever-eager demand for increasing speed and greater output, have created new accidents as fast as safeguards have been instituted to prevent them.

In my boyhood in the cotton mills, I had to run between great machines which menaced those who tended them. Most machinery now is protected, but in many employments nervous dangers have replaced physical ones. The recent London bus-dispute was, in part, due to bus-drivers having to cover distances with such finely cut time-tables that nervous breakdown frequently resulted.

In biscuit and shoe-polish factories, where girls have 1929
to go on interminably doing one tiny task thousands of times hour by hour, day by day, and week after week, the monotony sometimes becomes so great that hysteria results.

While I was at the Home Office I spent much time investigating such occupations, and trying to devise new laws whereby workpeople could be protected not only from their employers' desire for greater profits, but also from their own blind readiness to work themselves into early graves earning overtime money by merciless assiduity in unhealthy occupations.

Encouragement to scientists, surgeons and medical men added a long list of diseases of occupation for which Workmen's Compensation could be secured, and went far to discover preventives for these diseases as well as cures for them.

1929 I visited many works and factories to watch the materials and processes which were the cause of such diseases, and I climbed high buildings and scaffoldings to examine the actual perils which engineers, crane-workers, labourers and others had to overcome in the pursuit of their daily bread.

The huge power-station at Battersea was being built at the time, and several accidents and deaths were caused by gigantic cranes overturning at various places.

By means of workmen's devices, I travelled at Battersea seven or eight stories up the unfinished mountains of brickwork that then represented the enormous chimneys, and got a bird's-eye view—and a very uncomfortable and hair-raising one it was—of the actual machinery and obstacles that had cost men's lives. The rubble and impedimenta below looked singularly unpleasant, and I should not have cared to have to work there for long.

I examined a new safety-device for the crane-drivers, which indicated when a maximum safe load had been reached. When an excessive load was lifted, the ringing of a powerful gong warned the driver and foreman that they were going beyond the limits of safety.

I visited chemical works where substances used caused dangerous skin diseases, and munition factories where workmen's lungs had been affected by atomised reagents used in the manufacture of incendiary and poison-gas

Topical Press

THE HOME SECRETARY, HIGH ABOVE THE STREET, INSPECTING DANGEROUS SECTIONS OF THE HALF-BUILT BATTERSEA POWER-STATION CHIMNEYS

shells. In addition, I went carefully into the details of laws affecting the cubic space allotted to factory workers, the temperature of certain metal works, factory supplies of air, light, drinking-water and rest-rooms, and the rules concerning fire-escapes in big buildings.

I found that much needed to be done in the supply of proper sanitary conveniences, and in rules to prevent the accumulation of ordinary dust in big buildings, since the dust harboured disease germs and vermin. It was very interesting to read the results of experiments showing the differences in the incidence of disease in factories kept thoroughly cleansed, and in similar factories of the older type where dirt, cobwebs and waste were permitted to collect in all sorts of odd corners.

In the revision of factory and shop laws, I found it 1929 invaluable to be able to call on the assistance of colleagues who, like myself, had known the bad conditions during personal experience before they entered Parliament, and of Trade Union officials who in many cases were still pursuing their everyday work in close contact with such conditions.

My own limbs bore marks of former work in Lancashire, where splinters had pierced my feet, leaving scars lest I should forget, and where my fingers might any day have been grasped by the greedy teeth of the cotton machinery. I spent my days at the Home Office studying how to avoid for others the dangers and scars which I bore myself.

I did not relish the experiences I had in studying face to face the processes which brought disease and death to workpeople in various industries. But they were better than the feeling of being a kid-glove Home Secretary, content to sit in a padded arm-chair and theorise comfortably about details of dangers that were pleasantly afar off.

While I was busy at the Home Office, the Labour Government was occupied with its task of trying to restore trust and sanity to a disordered and deeply suspicious world.

Mr. Snowden conducted a series of important talks on Reparations, and unravelled that tangled problem almost completely despite much foreign opposition, and criticism at home. Henderson at the Foreign Office arranged with France and Italy to clear up the muddle of the Rhineland, and evacuate the German territory as swiftly as might be.

1929 France endeavoured to delay, but the persuasiveness of my colleagues overcame Gallic mistrust, and the Rhineland provinces were finally emptied of foreign troops, and a considerable step taken towards pacifying a suspicious and frightened Europe. Vast bodies of soldiers moved back to Britain, France, Italy and Belgium, after a ten-year occupation, and arrangements ran smoothly and without any sort of hitch.

There were no " incidents," no international disagreements, and the soldiers marched away leaving behind them much less hate than might have been expected among the people on whom they had forcibly quartered themselves for so long.

Towards the end of 1929, we sent representatives to the League of Nations to pursue the Labour policy of pacification in Europe. Arthur Henderson signed a Treaty absolutely binding Great Britain to submit disputes with other natins to the League Court, and France, Germany and Italy also signed. Many smaller countries followed suit.

Thus, at the instance of a Labour Government, the world's greatest nations renounced war as an instrument of international policy. Alas that a few have been unfaithful!

It is to be hoped that Britain, in the future, will honour this " Scrap of Paper " more than Italy did in the recent Abyssinian dispute. At least, we of the Labour Government did our best when we had the chance.

The League of Nations has always been vigorously supported by British Labour. It is certainly the greatest man-made factor towards international peace, and though it has failed twice so far to prevent war, and may fail again, it has succeeded in preventing some threatened conflicts and its eventual victory over war is certain if members remain loyal to their pledges. 1929

In pre-War days, an appeal for a League of Nations fell upon deaf ears. Security was sought in " the balance of power." That proved to be a ghastly mistake, spreading the contagion of a local Austro-Serbian irritation into a plague that swept ten million men to death. Yet now a section in the British Tory Party is trying to return to the old alliance system.

Before 1914, Germany proudly proclaimed her ability to keep the peace by the terror of her apparition in shining armour. Yet her armour was hacked away and she still bleeds from many wounds of her own making.

The United States declared a policy of " splendid isolation," but she could not isolate herself from the world inferno. She has learned, however, that she may not remain isolated.

For those who seek peace, the only remaining course is to join a League of Nations, and replace the arbitrament of battle where might is right with the judgment of an unprejudiced international Court which does not fear to give its ruling impartially for weak or strong, rich or poor.

The basic idea of the League's work with regard to peace is very simple. It is that, in the event of any international dispute, the case should be submitted to the League for the judgment of the nations which are members of it.

Obviously, such a method would be along lines to the benefit of the world, since the greater part of the world's population would be represented. Instead of a Jameson Raid or a Serajevo Incident bringing possible dreadful consequences, it would be settled justly without recourse to war.

It has been suggested that the League should retain a sort of International Army, powerful enough to overawe or smash the fighting forces of any single State.

That system would, I fear, be bound to fail. It would be the beginning of the old alliance method once more.

By boycotting trade, applying promptly economic sanctions, and taking full measures to send an offending nation socially " to Coventry," the League could enforce any ruling it made. There would be no need for yet another " war to end wars," with the League as the principal combatant.

Some day, the League of Nations will be as established a thing as the Civil Courts are nowadays. But before that time comes in its fullness, nations must become aware that their honour lies in peaceful progress, not bombast, but in candour, not intrigue.

So long as the peoples of the earth are content to sit drowsily by and let their names be used as political cyphers, there will never be peace. While liars are allowed to put the seals of great nations on Treaties like the Kellogg Pact, and are then capable of dishonouring the pact, the world will not be safe.

If the Kellogg Pact were kept, it would make war impossible. It has been broken in spirit and letter ; it is a " Scrap of Paper " which has been torn up because it stands for peace, and by the very countries which draw the sword most swiftly to defend any Treaty that is an excuse for war.

In the Cabinets of 1929 the question of our support to the League often arose, as it was a favourite subject of attack upon us by the Conservatives. But we refused to compromise or weaken our policy.

1929 Another weapon which the Opposition used against us to a surprising extent was criticism against our tendency to check gaming and lotteries. We had most of us been poor men ourselves, and had worked with poor men, and we knew well how easily the British workman will inflict hardship on himself in his passion for a gamble.

Personally, I had hardly any interest in the gaming laws, though as Home Secretary it was my duty to see that gambling did not go on to an extent liable to have an ill effect on the country. I knew, of course, that a few individuals (not always for their own good) became rich in a night as a result of lotteries, while many were ruined because of the losses they had to endure to supply the money for the winners' pockets.

I soon found that, while the winners gave me no credit, those who were prevented from losing by a tightening of the Law were very ready to heap abuse on me. I received a number of scurrilous letters, many of them anonymous, on all aspects of the subject.

For instance, I had not the faintest semblance of an idea what Football Pools were, and took no action whatever concerning them. All the same, I received the following letter :

> " Sir,—Your condemnation of Football Pools is unadulterated tripe. Pardon my vehemence, but that, in short, is my modest opinion."

Another letter read :

> " What I can't stand is that crosswords and other competitions where you have to pay sixpence are allowed to carry on. I should think they are kept on because *you* get 5½d. out of every 6d. What is wanted is another war, so that such as you and other spoil-sports can be stood up and shot right away."

This epistle went on to argue that many people were on the dole because I was trying to prevent them getting money !

In the autumn of 1929 it was decided to call a Five-Power Naval Conference, as a further pursuance of Labour's work for peace. The United States, France, Italy, Japan and Britain agreed to attend in London to discuss the problem of naval parity, and the limitation of armaments.

The Conference was eventually opened in January, 1930, by King George V, and was the first public ceremony he attended after his grave illness. I went with His Majesty as usual, and was delighted to notice his firm voice and quick step, betokening an apparently complete return to health. 1930

The Naval Conference was nearly wrecked at the outset by a quarrel between France and Italy as to which of them should have a preponderant naval power in the Mediterranean. But this country, America and Japan reached agreement, and much wasteful competition in battleship-building was suspended.

A modern battleship costs about £8,000,000 to build, yet it is obsolete in four or five years. Labour avoided certain battleship construction in 1929–31, and put the money into social services. We believe in constructing for peace, not for war.

At the Home Office I was kept very busy. Although every day included some part of the same routine, every day also produced something new.

The motor car which was placed at my disposal, and which I tried at first to avoid using, soon became a great boon and time-saver ; and I required every minute at my office that I could possibly get.

I had to travel a good deal, and even when on the road or in a train I was seldom without masses of papers. A Home Secretary with a poor memory would be useless. At the Home Office one must work very quickly, or find oneself constantly behind, and surrounded by piles of documents, books and departmental reports.

At the Food Ministry I thought the limit of my powers had been reached, for I had to tackle a new and difficult problem every day, but at the Home Office such a puzzle presented itself each hour, and I discovered new heights of endurance.

1930 My visitors were often very helpful, but occasionally they proved somewhat trying. Deputations found their way through to me on what were occasionally silly pretexts, and wasted my time till I could listen to them no longer.

A famous predecessor of mine at the Home Office used an amusing subterfuge to escape from such situations. A secretary, summoned by the pressing of an invisible bell beneath the table, came hurriedly into the room, and announced : " A telephone call for you, sir, from the Palace."

With a hasty word of apology, the Minister left the room and pursued his labours quietly elsewhere until the visitors tired of waiting and went away, when he returned. If necessary, the Secretary informed persistent callers that he had been commanded to go to the Palace at once—a thing which happens often enough in a Home Secretary's life not to excite suspicion.

I had no such line of defence, and as a Labour man I had to be more approachable than members of other parties usually are. Sometimes my callers were helpful, sometimes the reverse.

But I felt that I would rather suffer occasional annoyance and waste of time, and see many useless visitors, than turn away a single claimant who had a real grievance or a genuine need to be heard.

In such matters I found my subordinates at the Home 1930 Office perfectly human and considerate. There is no more unjust and stupid conclusion than that sometimes expressed about the dried and hard official mind of civil servants and men in high positions in public services.

I have found them just as wishful as anyone else to be reasonable and merciful, though they must remember that an exception to the rules once made is always liable to be quoted afterwards as a precedent, sometimes much to their embarrassment.

Chapter X

1929–1931—The problem of capital punishment and the Home Office—My work on murder appeals—The Woolmington case—The Rouse case comes before me—Podmore and the Southampton garage murder—A true ghost story—I am denounced as a " hangman " and reprimanded by the I.L.P.—The Gutteridge case—My opinion of the faults of the murder reprieve system—Contacts with George V in criminal cases—Some amusing letters at the Home Office—The man who wanted to be a hangman.

One of the first serious trials with which I met in my position as Home Secretary was that connected with death sentences.

I do not believe in this form of punishment ; yet, at the Home Office, it was my duty on various occasions to dismiss vivid appeals for mercy, and to refrain from intervention when men were on their way to the gallows.

Capital punishment seems to me more like an act of revenge than punishment for correction. I have carefully studied the figures on the matter, and I am convinced that hanging does not prevent murder or lessen crime statistics.

1930 I was the only Home Secretary who took a definite step towards the abolition of this form of punishment. But we were turned out of office before anything could be done to alter the law.

Because my views were known, there was a great public outcry on various occasions between 1929 and 1931 whenever a murderer went to the gallows. I was told in hundreds of letters that I ought to use my power to grant a reprieve in all cases.

It is amazing that any man should expect a Home

Secretary to set aside the law, to be false to his oath as a Minister, ignore the prerogative of the King (for it is *that* and not the " power " of the Secretary of State that grants reprieves), and apply the law not in keeping with his duty but according to his personal opinion.

Whenever I could find cause or reasons for recommending mercy, I did so, and the prerogative was used.

When I became Home Secretary, I made a firm resolve not to be influenced by mass appeal, petitions, resolutions, or the mournful pleas of interested parties. This sort of sentiment is the most unjust of all forms of law, and when it is expressed through the medium of hysterical public meetings, mob petitions and Press discussions, the worst stage has been reached.

A murder case should never resolve itself into a contest between the Home Secretary and a condemned criminal.

Thousands of emotional people sign petitions believing that the mere number of their names will influence a State official to deviate from his duty. I believe they are always wrong ; indeed, it may well be that the greater the number of signatures, the harder becomes the resolve not to be influenced by them. The signatories know nothing of the case save for newspaper snippets concerning its more sensational aspects.

1930 Even the wives and relations of Home Secretaries have urgent messages sent to them, and Mrs. Clynes was approached to use her influence in certain murder cases which I had to consider. Such appeals can do no good.

There is a great deal of misunderstanding about the actual work done by a Home Secretary regarding a murder appeal. He is commonly regarded as a last line of attack, after the Law has passed sentence. This is a great mistake.

The Home Office is not a super-Court. It is unable to re-try a case with which the judges have finished. It is able only to soften a sentence on human grounds, when proper evidence is produced to show that such a course is really advisable.

If the Home Secretary could upset the decisions of our judges, merely because of opinion, sentiment or sympathy, then the British judicial system would become a farce.

1930 The Home Secretary, who is not usually a lawyer, soon discovers that the law is weighted in favour of suspected murderers. The ultimate object of the Crown is not to secure a conviction but to ensure justice. That is why the services of famous and highly feed Counsel are placed at the disposal of the poorest prisoners.

The case of Woolmington, charged with murder, is an instance of how a condemned prisoner may be liberated and what are the safeguards of English Law.

At the first trial, the jury failed to agree, and a re-trial was ordered. The second jury took an hour and a half to reach a verdict of " Guilty ! "

Woolmington then asked for and obtained leave to appeal. The Court of Criminal Appeal, presided over by the late Mr. Justice Avory, dismissed the appeal.

It was then that Woolmington obtained the Attorney-General's permission to take his case to the House of Lords. He was the first person to do so in a murder case since the Court of Criminal Appeal was set up.

The main ground of his last appeal was that Mr. Justice Swift had misdirected the jury, by telling them that the defence must prove that Woolmington's shooting of his wife was, as he claimed, accidental.

Having cited and commented upon a large number of legal authorities, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Sankey, said that though there was apparent authority for the law as laid down by his learned brother Swift, the authority was not sufficient. Lord Sankey concluded :

> " Through the web of the English criminal law, one golden thread is always to be seen : that it is the duty of the prosecution to prove the prisoner's guilt, subject to the defence of insanity and also to any statutory exception."

When dealing with a murder case, the Crown must prove that the death was the result of a voluntary act on the part of the accused (and that accused bore malice towards the murdered person). The jury may reject the accused's explanation, but unless the prosecution can prove that the act was both intentional and unprovoked the prisoner is entitled to be found innocent.

In Woolmington's case, he listened to the discussions round these legal points with the painful intensity of a man whose very life hangs by a thread. When Lord Sankey sat down, the accused man looked round him, bewildered by the phraseology and ceremony in which the final decision had been wrapped.

When his Counsel leaned over and shook his hand, he smiled in a frightened way, was liberated at once, and walked straight out of the dusty sunlight of the House of Lords into the street.

While I was considering certain murder appeals, a great volume of abuse poured daily into the Home Office, and many threats of personal violence and political eclipse were hurled at me. They usually emanated from uneducated persons who had whipped themselves up into a stage of hysteria in a matter they knew nothing about. 1930

This was particularly so when Alfred Arthur Rouse lay in the condemned cell, awaiting execution for the murder of a man whose very identity was never discovered, thus setting up a precedent in British Law.

This crime contained qualities of mystery, horror and novelty which have never been excelled in the history of murder.

Briefly, the story is that on a winter's night, a man was picked up in Rouse's car in North London, and given a lift to the Midlands. On a lonely road near Northampton, in the dawn, the car was stopped. Rouse got out, took a heavy mallet from his tool-box, hit his unknown victim over the head and stunned him. He then poured petrol over the insensible figure, particularly over the face and hands and other parts which could be easily identified, lighted the petrol, and walked away.

It was proved later that the murderer wished to have his own death presumed, so as to rid himself of debts and get free of other associations.

Rouse had a very bad record, but steps were taken during his trial to prevent the blemishes in his private life from being heard by the Jury. Chapter by chapter, a narrative the strength of which was beyond question was unfolded before them, and in his twists and turns to escape the pursuit of Crown Counsel, Rouse had to admit that much of what he said was totally untrue.

Eventually, after a sensational trial, the murderer was found guilty and condemned to be hanged. Later, it became my task to go over the evidence of the case, to discover whether I should advise the King that this man should be given another chance.

I sat long into the night, till the sounds of London grew still, but I found nothing in Rouse's favour. He had murdered, for a calculated and cold-blooded reason, a man with whom he had no quarrel, and whose name he did not even trouble to discover.

Before I finally decided not to interfere with the jury's verdict, I had a long conference with the Judge in the case, and was strengthened in my conclusions by what he said. It was not for me to advise His Majesty to extend his clemency to a man who had burned a stranger alive so as to escape from debts and from women betrayed and unprotected.

1930 I learned privately a fact never published that Rouse had taken out a large insurance on his life just prior to the murder. Arrangements had been made to draw the money after his presumed death.

His deed was a calculated wickedness if ever there has been one in history ; and with the law as it stood, I should have been breaking my Oath and shrinking from my plain duty had I recommended his reprieve.

Another murder case which I had to consider was that in which a man named Podmore was tried for the killing of a Southampton garage proprietor called Vivian Messiter.

Messiter was not a man with a close social circle, and when he vanished from the life of the town one day, his absence was not immediately marked. His one-man garage remained closed, and after a week or two, the oil company for which he was an agent sent a new manager to take charge.

This man's first discovery on opening up the garage was the decaying body of his predecessor, lying in a dark corner, badly mutilated by rats.

He did not instantly realise that a murder had been committed, but it was soon found by the Southampton police that Messiter had been killed by a hammer-blow on the head. Clever work by the local detectives eventually uncovered a trail, very difficult to follow because of the time which had elapsed since the murder, but which led to a man named William Podmore, who had been an agent of Messiter's.

Podmore left Southampton immediately after the murder, leaving a false address and a false reference. All traces of his associations with Messiter had been torn out or erased from the books of the garage.

As he had got clean away and changed his name, it was not easy to trace Podmore from among the forty million people of Great Britain. But with brilliance and persistence the police stuck to the trail.

One of the Southampton detectives discovered a tiny fact that led to a clue. The ex-agent at whom suspicion pointed had used, in inventing his false name and address, the names of some little-known back-streets in a Midland town ; names, moreover, which did not occur in Southampton or any town near it. Naturally, an intensive search was directed in that town, and there Podmore was eventually discovered to have lived as a young man. His movements were traced, details of his appearance elicited, and he was discovered at last, inside what he must surely have thought the safest bolt-hole imaginable—an English prison, where he was 1930
serving another sentence for another crime.

Fifteen months after Messiter had been murdered, a hand descended on Podmore's shoulder.

At the trial, the Crown produced documents discovered at Messiter's garage, proving that Podmore had been employed there and had defrauded his master. One of the most vital pieces of evidence in Court was a dirty old exercise-book, with some pages torn out.

In tearing them out, because they bore witness of his transactions with Messiter, Podmore had failed to notice what a lynx-eyed Southampton detective subsequently discovered—that indentations of writing had gone through and showed on a subsequent page left in the book.

Microscopes were used, and the signature—"W. H. Tho——" was decipherable. The whole word was not legible, but W. H. Thomas was the name Podmore had used in Southampton. The question then arose why Thomas, or Podmore, had wanted so urgently to tear out all reference to himself from Messiter's book immediately after the murder.

Subsequently, Podmore had obtained money by theft and moved to a position in the Stonebridge Hotel, near Coventry. Immediately the news of the discovery of Messiter's body was published, he left there hurriedly.

A coil of evidence was wound round the murderer in Court which gripped him like a foretaste of the hangman's hemp. He was found guilty of the murder of Messiter and was condemned to death.

Something like a true ghost story comes into this record, at the time when I was considering Podmore's appeal for mercy. I had been out of London, but just 1930 before the hanging a new agitation began, saying that vital new evidence was to be produced in the condemned man's favour.

I cut short my holiday, so as not to leave to others the troubles and responsibilities on which hung the issue of a man's life or death. I spent a long time at the Home Office, after giving instructions that anything new was immediately to be brought to my notice. Nothing whatever occurred.

I returned home late, and sat quietly reading, with no other person in the house. Absolute silence prevailed. Just at midnight—"The very witching time of night when churchyards yawn"—there came a knock on my door, hollow-sounding, as if made by a stick or a bony hand.

I opened the door, and there, standing a few yards away, was a dim figure, coarsely bearded, looking as like an apparition from the grave as any one would care to imagine.

"I have come to speak to you about the hammer used in the Podmore case," said a gentle voice.

I, as gently, replied that it would be improper for me to discuss such a matter in private, but that I would do so at the Home Office next morning, according to the requirements of my position.

"I—cannot—come—then," was the curious reply.

However, he turned away, and I closed the door. Anyone engaged long at the Home Office must cultivate a gift for detachment or he would suffer very great mental distress. I remember that I went straight back to my room and continued with my book, putting this queer affair out of my mind.

I gave special instructions next day that the informant was to be brought to me if he applied. But I never saw him again, and Podmore was hanged.

This case, more than any other I can recall, became the subject of intense public discussion. Thousands of excited persons denounced me as a "butcher" and a "hangman." When the widespread agitation for 1930 Podmore's reprieve did not succeed in its object, its activities were directed against me.

Though surrounded by law officers and expert legal advisers, the final decision not to recommend a reprieve for the murderer had rested upon my shoulders, and I had to stand the results.

The strongest pressure was put upon me by members of my own Party to advise the King to be merciful in this case. When I refused because my duty lay in refusal, the Independent Labour Party, at its annual

Conference at Birmingham, passed a resolution actually reprimanding me.

That any political body should go to that length provoked me to send the following reply :

> " Your Resolution requires me to ignore the solemn decisions of Courts, Judges and Jury, and to act on a personal opinion of capital punishment. I hope that no Secretary of State will ever be influenced by such an indefensible doctrine.
>
> " In the case in question, I searched for many days in the hope that I should find a reason for recommending a reprieve. I searched in vain.
>
> " I am not prepared to make a mock of the law, however strong my desire to change it may be. Public opinion in murder trials cannot be guided by the fullest information, and public opinion must not take the place of a Court of Law. It is the right of the public to *change* the law. It is the duty of the Minister to *apply* the law."

A daily newspaper, in a leading article, said at the time :

> " The most profound sympathy will be felt for the Home Secretary in the dreadful responsibility which he has had to bear in deciding whether Podmore should or should not be reprieved. . . . To one so gentle and sensitive as Mr. Clynes, the duty must have been peculiarly trying. It would have been easy for him to shirk it. To recommend a reprieve would have pleased some fourscore of his colleagues in Parliament who petitioned for that result. Mr. Clynes has acted from the highest motives of public duty."

1930 During my term as Home Secretary, I noticed many times how accident and circumstance, which neither the murderer nor anyone else could possibly have foreseen, eventually built up infallible proof of the guilt of certain murderers who might otherwise have escaped all human detection of their acts. This is particularly illustrated in the case of Police Constable Gutteridge's murder, though I was not then at the Home Office.

This case is in perfect keeping with the utterance of Hamlet :

> " For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
> With most miraculous organ . . ."

1930

Gutteridge, an Essex policeman, was on night patrol, and had made a point with another constable at 3.30 a.m. He was subsequently found lying dead by the roadside. He had been shot twice through the head, at close range, and later a bullet had been fired through each eye so close that powder-burns were found. There were no signs of a struggle, but his whistle was hanging loose, his hand grasped a pencil, and a note-book lay near.

In this case more than 1,000 persons were interviewed to obtain evidence. A mass of information was received, sifted and recorded. The photographs of 20,000 finger-prints of known criminals were examined, along one line of enquiry alone.

A fact emerged that a doctor's car containing medical instruments had been stolen on the night of the murder at a nearby village. A theory developed that the car-thieves had been stopped by Gutteridge, and had shot him in order to escape.

The Assistant Commissioner at Scotland Yard found a special significance in the black powder-marks round the victim's eyes. These proved that the revolver used must have been of a long-obsolete pattern.

The stolen car was found deserted, and beneath one of its seats was discovered an empty cartridge-case. Blood-stains were noticed on the offside running-board.

In due time, two men named Browne and Kennedy were arrested. They resisted the arrest, and only the chance that the revolver grasped by one of them happened to be unloaded saved him from committing another murder.

After shuffling and bravado, each of the men tried to turn the whole weight of the evidence against the other, but both were equally implicated by the Crown evidence in one of the most cruel murders ever committed. It was proved that, when Gutteridge was already dying from wounds in the head, one of the murderers walked coolly up to him and shot him again in each eye.

In dismissing the appeals made by these two men, the Lord Chief Justice said that their guilt was " as plain as a pikestaff." They were both hanged.

In such a case as this, the duty of the Home Secretary is plain—under no circumstances should he recommend the King to extend clemency to the murderers. But there are other examples where the path of duty is not clear.

I am far from satisfied with the present methods of dealing with murder appeals. No matter how humane a Home Secretary may be, he is bound by Oath to act within the law. He has no power to reprieve—only the King may allow human considerations to triumph over the decisions of the judges.

1930 The Home Secretary may advise the monarch to spare a life, but it must be honest advice, tendered within the law, not dictated by sentiment. It is no easy matter to convince a Sovereign that a murderer should be given back his life.

It is the system that is wrong, as things are. Either of two courses might be used to supersede the present method, whereby a temporary Minister takes the dread responsibility of refusing to assist a man in the shadow of the gallows, and of facing a storm of public and political pressure which should never be allowed to bear upon him.

A small Court, instead of a Departmental Minister might be set up to consider not merely the finer legal points, as in the case of Woolmington, but also the deeper humanities of capital cases. Alternatively, the Court of Criminal Appeal could be acknowledged as the final stage of recording a decision.

Until we make such a change, an embarrassed Minister will still be left, to brood in loneliness, over circumstances touching degrees of passion, temptation, incitement, provocation, jealousy, madness, or other aspects of a case which he may consider after the Courts have decided on questions of law, fact and evidence.

Is it right that a civilised nation should put one of its political servants in a position where, in plain fact, the life of one of his fellow-citizens depends on whether he will turn his thumb up or down ?

There are many people in this country who demand a life for a life, in the interests of public safety ; but which of them would care to occupy the position of the Home Secretary when an appeal for life lies on his desk ?

No truly civilised State should force its public servants to hold the power of life and death. It should erase capital punishment from its statute-book, and declare that no Government should have the power to kill.

Among the thousands of letters which pour into the Home Office when a murder appeal is under consideration, the majority always come from women, many of whom make hysterical promises to keep the murderer straight, even by marrying him, if he is reprieved.

In the Rouse case, where the accused man was a person of unquestionably bad moral character, these appeals were especially numerous.

Such letters are caused by mass hysteria or sensation- 1930
mongering. But there are other letters, from people of gentle feelings and real sympathy, which are heart-rending to read. They do no good. There is only one way to alter present conditions, and that is by changing the laws concerning murder cases. No one would welcome such changes more fervently than those statesmen of every Party who have held the position of Home Secretary, and who have had to withhold advice for clemency with the result that men have gone to die by the rope.

I still remember with sorrow and uneasiness the names and faces of men hanged by the neck until they were dead, who might have been alive to-day had I been able to recommend that the King's clemency should be exercised in their cases.

This is too dread a burden for any man to be made to bear.

During my term at the Home Office, I had frequently to see King George V in connection with criminal cases. How he acquired his range of knowledge on particular questions which I had to handle would be better known to his intimate advisers and secretarial staff. It surprised me !

This knowledge was particularly marked on questions of widespread interest and excitement, many such matters having formed the subject of Parliamentary debate or question, and therefore being covered by the daily Report sent from the House of Commons to the King after each sitting.

I had at times to discuss with His Majesty cases which it was painful to study with anyone. His relief was real when I was able to take him reports showing reductions in crime, and especially in crimes of violence.

He welcomed signs of more merciful and reformative treatment of serious criminals. Yet, though he was so considerate and desirous to be lenient, his indignation sometimes rose very high in cases where some act of brutality had been perpetrated on a woman or child.

1930 He considered his prerogative of royal clemency in murder cases as something of much more responsibility and importance than a mere casual signature on whatever dotted line was indicated by his advisers.

Among the volumes of correspondence addressed to me at the Home Office in the matter of murders and murderers, there was always a sprinkling that was unintentionally amusing. One letter, written and signed by a girl thirteen, speaks for itself :

> " I do think murderers need a more drastic punishment than just hanging. This is not at all a painful death, and not to be feared. Should a more terrible kind of punishment be inflicted, perhaps there would be less murders. . . ."

Unfortunately, she failed to give details of whatever more picturesque punishment she had in mind " to fit the crime." Perhaps her imagination baulked at that !

During my term as Home Secretary, two applications were made to me for the post of public hangman. Why these enquiries should have been addressed to me, I cannot tell. I had no idea whether the post was vacant, and it was not one of my duties to appoint a successor to it.

One of the letters read :

> " Sir,—I would like to put my case before you. I have took a very keen interest in executions for the last twenty years. I understand the job. I know how to set the drop and fix the straps, and the steel eyelet, and what drop to give for a given weight. I am strong and active, and I can do the job without turning a hair. I have a good nerve."

The writer made a strong personal appeal to me 1930 because, like myself, he had formerly been employed in a cotton-mill, and worked with textile machinery.

He certainly *had* a nerve !

Chapter XI

1929–1931—Personal protection necessary for the Home Secretary—When Mr. Henderson's life was menaced—My caller who committed suicide—A lady who smashed my windows with two meat-choppers—Was I a merciless Home Secretary?—When I refused to penalise a prison officer—Prison reforms that are needed—Tobacco needed in prisons—The Dartmoor mutiny—Child criminals—Visiting Borstals—Making our prisons pay—Reforming difficult criminals.

In the course of my work at the Home Office, I had much to do with legislation concerning the various aspects of crime and crime-prevention. It was considered that this entailed a certain amount of risk 1930 from persons who had, perhaps, some complaint against the restraints of the law, and protection was therefore offered me.

My first indication to this effect was a surprise to me.

When the second Labour Government was formed, the principal Ministers had to go to Windsor to meet George V, who was at that time still recovering from his serious illness. On returning to Paddington after seeing the King, I was about to step out of my carriage when I was approached by a big man in mufti.

He explained courteously that he was from the Special Branch of New Scotland Yard, and that he himself, a car and a chauffeur had been placed at my disposal as Home Secretary.

I thanked him, of course, but explained clearly that I did not think there was any necessity for any kind of protection, and I desired none. He urged me, however, to consent at least until he could receive other instructions from the Yard.

I complied. But in the interim I found that I was wrong. Protection *was* needed. There were many who might merely have wasted my time with impossible personal bequests, and others whose nerves, tried perhaps by the difficulties of approaching a high officer of State, were ready to do me violence when I appeared.

In the following years, I had one or two experiences which might have ended unpleasantly but for the courteous intervention of my personal detective.

Only a few Ministers are protected in this way, though at times of high political excitement the number is increased. It happened that I was not the only Labour Minister who grew tired of being shadowed.

One day, Arthur Henderson came to me and explained that he had been served for a long time by a personal detective, and that he had grown tired of not feeling free. There had been no incidents or disturbances whatever, and he asked me to take steps, as Home Secretary, to remove his guard. I advised him to change his mind, but he would not do so, and at his further pressing request, I cancelled the detective's duties.

Two days later, a man of commanding presence but 1930
impaired mind approached Henderson in a corridor leading to his rooms. The stranger carried a heavy service revolver, fully loaded, and proclaimed his intention of using it.

Some years previously, a Prime Minister's secretary was shot dead at No. 10 Downing Street, and it seemed as though our Foreign Secretary might follow suit. But he was a fearless personality, and he argued calmly with the stranger, soothing him till he put the weapon back in his pocket.

Later, the assailant was taken into custody, when it was discovered that he was insane. Mr. Henderson came to me later that day and asked me to restore his police protection.

One of the lightest of my own trials in this way took place one afternoon, when a lady was shown into the drawing-room of my London home, and proclaimed in a thrilling voice that she had come to spend the week-end with us. We realised immediately that a more suitable place for her week-end was a mental home.

The problem in these cases was to get the visitors gently away. However, we managed to persuade the lady to leave, which she did quite peacefully.

One day, a man, apparently well-to-do, called to see me. He spoke quite lucidly on matters of Government policy, and made certain suggestions which I noted as they seemed worth further consideration. Eventually, he shook hands and left, without expressing any grievance or showing anything but suavity and good humour.

I was shocked to be informed later that within an hour or so after leaving my house he had blown out his brains in a London hotel.

1930 One caller who came constantly to my house was a lady of business-like and practical manner, who repeatedly warned me that certain gangs wished to do me injury.

She assured me that these gangs were able to elude the most trained and skilful detectives, and gave me some gruesome details of their activities and intentions with regard to myself, particularly when I made light of their menaces.

Eventually she grew almost hysterical at my danger as outlined by her, but always in the end she went quietly away, evidently reassured by the fact that I had survived for so long.

I never met any of the gangs to which she referred, but on one occasion at least an instance of planned physical violence did come to my notice. The constant supervision of my personal detective at the Home Office and when I was travelling, and the uniformed constable who remained on duty outside my London house, did not serve to protect me in this case.

There came a morning when Mrs. Clynes and my daughter were at breakfast in a front room of my house, and I was upstairs. Suddenly, I heard a wholesale and prolonged smashing of glass, and ran down to see what was the matter.

MR. CLYNES IN DOWNING STREET WITH HIS PERSONAL DETECTIVE

To my amazement, I found a gentle-looking lady grasping a meat-chopper in each hand and staring in through a gaping, splintered hole in the window of the breakfast-room, while my wife and daughter were standing startled between the hastily abandoned breakfast table and the door.

The constable on duty outside had been a short distance away on his beat when this lady had entered the gate, crossed a small lawn, and begun her attack on the windows. She had certainly made a thorough job of them. Every window within reach from the ground had been beaten in. 1930

The constable had by this time come running up. He asked the lady some questions, and she explained lucidly and dispassionately that she had suffered some misfortune in a lengthy litigation in the Courts, and that the Home Secretary was responsible for a great injustice.

She was apparently of gentle birth, well-bred and educated, but she had decided to make a striking protest. She had travelled down from Yorkshire, purchased in the neighbourhood the two choppers she carried, wrapped them in newspaper, and brought them to my house. On being told at the door that the Home Secretary could only see her at his office, she quietly took the weapons from their wrappings, and walked along the lawn, breaking all the windows.

On the whole it were better to attack the windows, though the eight broken ones cost me about £14 to replace, and I had to find the money, since there seemed to be no Government provision for such damage.

Of course, I knew nothing of the lady's case, and in any event the Home Secretary has no power to interfere in private litigation or to influence the law for or against any one. So the protest served no useful purpose.

The lady was taken away by the constable, and subsequently appeared in the local court. Her determination was in no degree lessened by her failure to interview me, and she calmly informed the Magistrate that if she could not get redress, her next step would be to break *his* windows.

She was eventually placed in the care of friends, and I believe the Magistrate's windows have remained intact.

1930 I certainly had quite enough to do with various aspects of the law at the Home Office, without having fresh duties added at the voice of public opinion or protest. Yet the complaints went on, some being made personally in this manner, and far more being published in book or newspaper form.

Nor did they end when I left office. Not long ago, a book was published which attacked me in a very bitter fashion. It was written by one who had spent ten years serving a sentence at Parkhurst, and a famous novelist attached his name to the volume to air certain comments.

In this book I was depicted as one of the most merciless and casual Home Secretaries of recent years.

Among other things, it was alleged that I approved the savage punishment of a nerve-racked, war-broken prisoner. This man was supposed to have had a silver plate in his head. It was said that his nerves were irritated to breaking point by a vicious warder, that he thrashed the warder, and that I was then finally responsible for his receiving twenty-four strokes of the cat-o'-nine-tails, followed by nine days' solitary confinement on bread and water.

The tale was told with admirable sentiment, but it is totally untrue in fact.

A Board of Prison Visitors—the proper tribunal—found this convict guilty of gross and unprovoked violence to an officer, and ordered serious punishment. I had nothing whatever to do with their decision, or with the awarding of the punishment ; that was all settled by the Tribunal and the prison authorities.

The details came before me, and it was my duty to examine a medical report on the prisoner. Had anything in this report suggested that the man's condition justified a lightening of the punishment, I should have reduced the sentence ; but only on medical grounds could I interfere.

I read carefully through the medical report. It stated that the prisoner's health and mental condition were normal. No mention was made of a silver plate, though it was stated that the prisoner had a bald silvery patch of skin on his head, due to the treatment of ringworm.

I let the sentence pass with regret, and it was duly carried out.

Personally, I do not believe in flogging, but I was at the Home Office to administer the law, not to alter it to suit my taste. Had I been there longer, I would have tried, by collaboration with the proper officials and authorities, to have it abolished in our prisons. It is rarely inflicted now, and only for grave offences, but I think it does no good, and I want to see it go.

If the nation also disapproves of flogging, its remedy can be obtained in the House of Commons, not through the publication of sensational books. It is a common extravagance for ex-criminals to print these wild statements declaring that English prisons are incompetently run on barbarous lines, but the public usually accepts them for what they are worth.

I have been accused of playing an eager part in 1930
prison cruelties. For instance, it was stated recently :

> " In the days of Mr. Clynes, photographs and the little decorations with which convicts had been permitted to decorate the bare walls of their cells were ruthlessly torn down by orders from Whitehall. . . ."

Of course all this would be very touching were it not a complete untruth.

I have been said to have been to Dartmoor once, for an hour, and to have come away and said : " Our prison system has reached the acme of perfection." Lies again !

I have never, anywhere, said anything of the sort. I am well aware that much needs to be done to improve the British prison regime. While I was at the Home

Office I did what I could to alter conditions ; the records remain.

My visit to Dartmoor took some time. I was in the prison several hours, studying the food, drink, work, housing and leisure of the prisoners. Afterwards, I inspected gangs of men working on the moor. I made certain suggestions for improvements.

Short of staying there and serving a sentence for my crimes as Home Secretary, I could hardly delay in Dartmoor after my work there was done.

Although it has been said that I " never troubled to examine conditions at first hand," I went, in addition, to Wormwood Scrubs, Pentonville, Strangeways (Manchester), boys' and girls' Borstals, Home Office Schools, and so on—a record which the hardiest of my criminal critics could scarcely equal !

Nor was I " merciless " on any occasion.

1930 I once had to deal, for example, with a case of petty theft on the part of a prison officer. This man had a good and honourable record, and was due before very long to retire on a pension. In a momentary lapse, he was fool enough to take out of the prison an article worth less than one shilling, not by accident but clearly as an act of theft.

According to regulations, which are necessarily strict in such cases, his act, when proved, had to be followed by dismissal and loss of pension. The proper Tribunal dealt with the case, found the man guilty, and awarded sentence. According to practice, their decision came before the Home Office for confirmation.

I thought long over the matter, and the facts were not in dispute, but I could not bring myself to sanction such a cruel punishment for one trifling slip, after a lifetime of service. I declared that I would refuse to agree to the sentence, which would have punished not only the offender but his family.

I was told that there was no alternative to my agreement. I answered that one would have to be found, or else a new Home Secretary would have to be appointed more complacent than I. So long as I remained at the Home Office, I should resolutely refuse my signature to the necessary documents.

The matter was discussed at the Home Office for a very long time before my decision finally triumphed. The officials concerned felt bound by the regulations, but they were personally human and considerate, and in the end a way was found by which the heavy punishment was avoided, and the officer continued in the prison service.

While I was Home Secretary, I constantly advocated 1930 more reformative treatment for prisoners as well as for their officers. The main feature of imprisonment is loss of liberty ; its chief object should be reformation, not revenge. In many of our institutions, I found that the word " discipline " was the most overworked one in the language. It was far too often a synonym for repression.

Stern and unbending enforcement of authority, especially if applied by a military mind, may exact obedience, but it breeds hatred and results in outbreaks of trouble. I do not approve of the preference to select soldiers of the martinet type as prison officials ; too often their longing for precision becomes an unhealthy passion within prison walls.

Prisoners of every class that I met had a high conception of their rights. They considered that they were paying bitterly for wrongs they may have inflicted on others. As relief from their ordeal, they looked forward with penetrating longing to the few opportunities for relaxation and freedom that the regulations permitted them.

Complaints regarding food, work and general treatment I found to be rare, but I was told that the monotony of prison life often developed into an agony. The imposition of silence and the deprivation of any friendly exchange which might make prison existence easier to bear were not, I found, sufficiently appreciated by some of the men in positions of prison authority.

Prisoners never forgive brutality because they have no real redress for it. They told me that even worse than physical violence was the contemptuous tone used to them by certain officials, the degrading tasks, and the nagging attempts made by a few persons to address and treat them as if they were less than men. Against such treatment they have no defence.

Prison governors, chiefs, warders and the like have, of course, most difficult duties. It is easier to criticise their shortcomings than to do their tasks. But some of them seem to forget that even prisoners have rights which may be expressed freely, and that repression of those just rights may lead to discussions in the House of Commons.

Parliamentary Commissions have explored many prison problems, but still prisoners brood upon their wrongs. Our criminals cost the country a great deal of money ; and it is for us to reduce their numbers by treating them in such a way that they emerge from prison determined to try to live as useful members of a civilised community, not intent simply on revenge on a society which has hurt them beyond repair.

From my own experience, I should say that more intimate contact with prisoners would reveal a candour and a truthfulness that might well play a constructive part in reshaping our whole prison conditions.

1930 I found that the denial of a cigarette or tobacco is more remembered by many prisoners than any other aspect of their punishment. Even gifts from outside friends are forbidden. Restrictions in conversation, too, seem often to be carried beyond all limits of humanity. I should say that in most cases the complete loss of liberty is sufficient punishment, without adding these other irritations as well.

Firmness is no less effective because it is mixed with humanity and fairness. Hard work is demanded of prisoners, but better results might be obtained if the work was done under conditions that did not resemble the labour of slaves.

Some time after the second Labour Government quitted office, dissatisfaction inside certain prisons came

THE HOME SECRETARY WITH A GROUP OF PRISON OFFICIALS

to a head under new and sterner regimes, and a serious mutiny occurred at Dartmoor, and lesser ones in Glasgow and other great gaols.

It was stated at the time that the trouble was mainly due to overcrowding, but this was not so. When I visited Dartmoor, there was accommodation for more than twice the number of convicts detained there. Nor were the outbreaks caused by bad food, or lack of occupation or exercise. Prison food is very often better than that eaten by thousands of our population, inadequately paid at work or unemployed.

The reason for the outbreaks appears to have been a widespread conviction that though facilities such as libraries and concerts were offered to prisoners, human consideration was denied them, and an air of contempt was becoming general towards them from the immediate officials who had to do with them.

During months of incarceration, the deprivation of 1930
little rights may be brooded over and grow into injustices for which men would risk their freedom and even their lives. In the Dartmoor affair, one of the rights that was sought was, again, permission to smoke occasionally.

I remember visiting George Lansbury when he was in prison with other Labour men, making a fight for what they considered to be a just cause. Lansbury himself does not smoke, but he told me that the thing his colleagues missed most was—tobacco! Next to that came the lack of something interesting to do.

Many prisoners have told me that Sunday in gaol is the day of greatest punishment, because of its enforced idleness.

It has taken us a long time to realise that there is no sense in letting a man loose in the world after a prison sentence, no better than when he went behind the bars. An improved familiarity with the New Testament may be but an ironical consolation to such a man, friendless and ostracised, facing a chill society, with a shilling or two for railway-fare in his hand, no job, no prospects, and no idea of where or how his night's rest will be obtained.

The policy of proper industrial training, with some incentive to make use of it, is not molly-coddling our prisoners. I would rather say that it represents society trying to give itself a chance.

While I was at the Home Office, I tried to improve conditions concerning the punishment of children and young people. Far too many children, even now, are taken to court and asked involved legal questions they cannot possibly understand, and are then sent to gaol because they grow confused and answer at random.

As recently as 1926, 2,600 children under 16 were imprisoned. This is a poor record for a civilised country. About 31 per cent of our criminals take their first serious step in law-breaking before they are 15. Slums and unemployment have much to answer for in this direction, but a big field is left for juvenile criminal reform.

We should try to shape our child criminals so that they subsequently fit into society, rather than expel them from it to become lifelong enemies of the community.

Every day now our judges are faced with hardened "old lags" who might have been decent citizens but for cruel legal penalties in their childhood. Pitiful examples of this were brought to my notice at the Home Office.

1930 In one such case, the man's story was that he had made a false declaration to get into the Army and had received a month's imprisonment. In another, a lad had been given three months for stealing a pigeon.

Then came a record in each instance of pathetical sameness. Twenty-one convictions for one of them; eighteen for the other. Sometimes it would be for no more than "behaving as a suspected person," or "loitering" or "frequenting." Truly enough, they never had a chance.

I used to find myself wondering, when as Home Secretary I inspected some great prison, and passed rows and rows of men, each a number not a name, standing to attention beside his arrested task, how many of them in a fairer world would have had to seek forgiveness from their fellows—and how many would have had to grant it.

Behind each of those listless masks was a whole human tragedy. What would be its end?

How many of them had been hopelessly handicapped from the start? At least modern society is trying now to give young offenders a slightly better chance.

While at the Home Office, it was my duty to visit and 1930 examine the Borstals and Special Schools run for the benefit of youthful law-breakers. Much good is being done in them.

It has been said that criminals are roughly divisible into two classes—those who should never enter a prison and those who should never leave one. Without subscribing to this view, I am certain that our Borstals turn aside from criminal paths many persons who would otherwise regularly encumber our gaols.

It seems hard to believe that only a hundred years ago a fourteen-year-old boy was sentenced to death for stealing seven shillings. In 1850, children of five years old were cast into prison with old offenders, and hundreds of adolescents were deported.

There are now over one hundred industrial schools in England and Wales where neglected or degraded children are given a fresh start in life. Of these, only about 5 per cent of the boys and 1 per cent of the girls subsequently drift into regular crime.

These figures emphatically disprove the outcries of critics that industrial schools and Borstals make criminals instead of reforming them.

If a hardened criminal can be held up as once having been a Borstal boy, we are certain to hear of it. But we never hear of the great majority who have been trained and educated by Borstal treatment, and who have turned out to be among the best of our citizens. Any prison system has to deal with the worst, not the best, material, and we can hardly blame it because it does not succeed in every individual case.

During the life of the second Labour Government, a number of measures were put in hand to lighten the lives of those sent to such institutions. Some of our reforms we succeeded in passing into law ; others were completed after we left office, but were substantially along lines laid down by myself and others while I was Home Secretary.

Games are now encouraged ; inmates are advised to take up hobbies ; gardening is allowed and comfortable rooms are provided for work, leisure and sleep. Some of these schools do farm-work and are largely self-supporting. Trades and handicrafts are taught ; and cookery and household duties are part of the training in the women's Borstal.

1930 The modern tendency to try to make our institutions pay largely for their own upkeep has extended right through our prison system. Convicts built the naval harbour at Portland, and similar work was done at Portsmouth and Chatham.

The Portland breakwater has been made by convicts into a defensive bastion over two miles long, and sinking some sixty feet down into the sea, while the convict-built Verne batteries and barracks make the place one of the strongest naval bases in the world.

At one place defence forts have been built by prisoners, who have also constructed great magazines at Chattenden. The men who forged the iron, dressed the stone and hewed the timber for these works have, in most cases, taken well-paid civil work in similar employments after leaving gaol.

Under present rules, marks are awarded for proficiency in prison labour, to encourage the men to learn useful trades. When the marks reach a certain total, restrictions are lessened and extra food allowed.

Prisoners are taught book-keeping, laundering, tailoring, bookbinding, printing, ironwork, masonry, basket-making, farming and several other trades. Some build roads and aircraft bases.

Japan is said to make an actual profit from her prisoners. We do not do that, but while our total prison services cost us about £700,000 a year, the income from them is already over £400,000 a year, and is still rising.

The figures are rather misleading, for most of our convicts are employed on national work, or on work which, if it were given out in Government contracts, would cost the country at least twice as much as at present. Nor is prison labour allowed to compete with private enterprise.

It has been suggested that prisoners under sentence of death might be given the alternative, as a first step towards the abolition of the death penalty, of submitting themselves voluntarily to medical and surgical infection and experiment in such dangerous diseases as tuberculosis and cancer. After a period of years, they would be allowed to go honourably free ; and of course such experiments would not be undertaken unless the prisoner chose them in preference to hanging. I state this rather than advocate it. 1930

My work as Home Secretary convinced me of this, that until we make our criminals feel that by learning self-control they are of some value to their more fortunate fellows, we shall always fill our prisons as fast as we can empty them. They will never try to reform until, by gaining their self-respect, they discover that they have within themselves something worth reforming.

Chapter XII

1929–1931—Tackling increasing crime—Causes of crime—The birch and the " cat "—Borstal boys' sports—The problem of persistent offenders—After prison, what ?—Prison reforms—Solitary confinement makes criminals—Payment of prisoners—Training prisoners for future work—Trial and error at the Home Office.

1930 During my term at the Home Office, I had to face the fact that there had been a noticeable increase in crime during the preceding few years. This tendency has gone on since ; crime statistics are mounting, not falling.

I am leaving out of account the enormous increase in road offences, most of which are of a comparatively trivial nature. By far the greatest proportion of modern crime consists of larceny, shop-breaking, house-breaking, etc. Shop-breaking and shoplifting head the list. The persons prosecuted are mainly youths and girls below twenty-one—I think in nearly three cases out of four.

American films have something to answer for in this particular. In many of them, gangsters, thieves and thugs are shown in heroic or comic guise ; while typists and factory girls appear in costly clothes and silk stockings. Young film-fans consequently feel that there is not much wrong in helping themselves to the money or the stockings by robbing a till or abstracting items from a store counter.

To change the nature of the film industry would need a George Washington in America rather than a Gladstone here. There remains the question of discouraging those who fall into temptation.

Many clamour for more severity for its own deterrent sake. The fundamental need, we all feel, is to cure and reform; but how is it to be done? Prison officials and medical experts do not agree on the constructive value of stern punishment, and are equally at variance on the wisdom of spending national money in trying kindly to reclaim the possibly irreclaimable.

Some advocate the birch and the "cat" because they are said to frighten delinquents. It is said that no prisoner who has been sentenced to the "cat" has ever committed an offence requiring a second dose.

It is a sobering reflection for the Englishman, even if this be true, that his country has not yet reached that stage of civilisation where torture can safely be abandoned!

Birching has been given up by all the best Children's Courts in England and Wales; and the Government in 1932 provided for its complete abolition. The House of Commons by a large majority passed the clause abolishing whipping; but it was defeated by the savage patricians of the House of Lords, and birching is therefore still permissible.

1930 Personally I disagree strongly with both birching and the use of the "cat." While Home Secretary I was anxious to put in hand measures for the discontinuance of both, but we were out of office before anything final could be done.

Sir William Clarke Hall gave up ordering the birch in his Court because he found that birching brought in its train the highest percentage of repetitions of the offence. He explained this in the following way:

> "Far from proving a deterrent, birching often has the exactly opposite effect, and the boy leaves court to repeat his misdemeanour immediately. . . . The type of boy who comes before the Court charged with theft has little in his life of which to be proud, but he is proud of his own pluck and enterprise and is usually supported in this by a small circle of admirers. To forfeit their admiration would be the greatest humiliation he could experience. After the sentence his friends gather round him to see

> how he has taken it. The last thing in the world he would wish them to think would be that he was cowed or in any degree deterred, and the obvious way to prove that he is not is again to commit a similar offence."

In the treatment of youthful offenders, we are still inclined in many courts to err on the side of severity and so stimulate the very crimes we desire to repress. The Magistrate of the Indian Army type who thinks that youths are made to sin and be flogged and then repent and turn into good soldiers is rarer than he used to be when I was a lad, but is unfortunately not extinct.

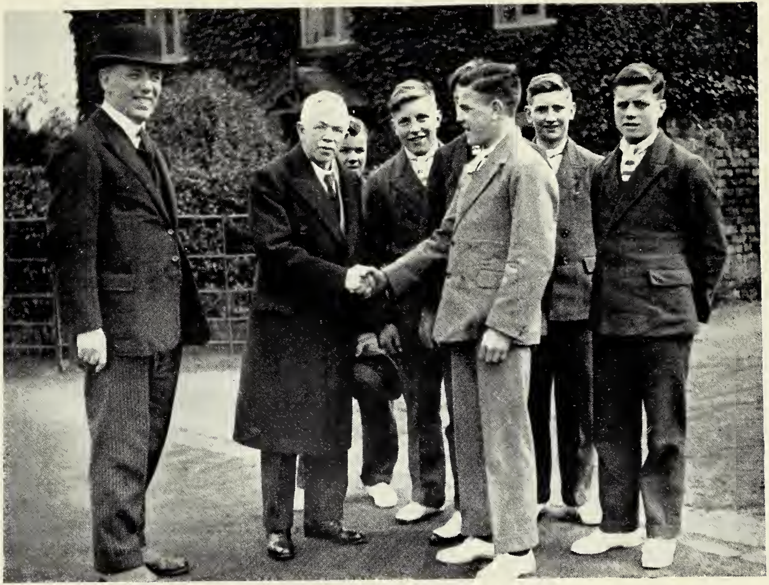
My own experience among youthful offenders, of whom I saw a good number while I was at the Home Office, all goes to show that kindness and forbearance are well repaid.

I remember a bank holiday in August, 1930, when I was officially invited to watch the Sports of the Borstal boys at Rochester. They harboured the same sort of healthy rivalry and love of the game which have secured for British sport such world-wide praise. They did not look like sinister young criminals, but like flushed young athletes.

Their motives in relation to winning and losing were the same as those of boys who are free to walk out of the school grounds when the sports are done. No trophies were stolen, nor was there any unfairness in competition ! the men in charge were greeted as Masters, not as Warders ; and they were obviously well liked by the lads in their charge.

1930 I am well aware that even a few words of praise in relation to any institution which can be classed as a prison will be twisted into terms of maudlin approval of our prison system. That has happened to me often already, and I have ceased to be surprised at it. But I will risk any misunderstanding to reveal the truth, and it is true to say that the Borstal boys I saw at their sports could not be distinguished from any group of Public School students in the playing fields of a college.

About 10,000 youths are found guilty of indictable



VISITING A HOME OFFICE SCHOOL

offences every year, and a great number of these find their way to Borstal Institutions. There their position is viewed with the idea of giving them technical training in skilled trades, so that, when they emerge into the world, they shall be able to be self-supporting.

Three-fourths of the Borstal lads make good in after life, and come to be classed among the best of our population.

A Home Secretary does well to try to keep an eye on the thousands of young offenders who are technically in his charge. It is useless sitting in Whitehall and being content with the unfeeling statistics of official papers. The human touch may well educate the Home Secretary as much as or more than the lads he visits. More time should be given to developing it than is usually the case, so that the Borstal boys may be judged as men's sons and future citizens, rather than as wild animals restrained.

The modern tendency to treat criminals as human 1930 beings is showing good results. Since 1930, a record has been kept of the subsequent history of all prisoners convicted for the first time of " finger-print offences." Details of the subsequent history up to the end of 1935 of prisoners in this class, showed that of 30,151 cases received into prison for the first time between 1930 and 1933, 24,326 (80·7 per cent) had not returned to prison a second time up to the end of 1935.

While at the Home Office, I created a Committee to study the problem of persistent offenders, with a view to changes being suggested with regard both to their treatment in prison and their position when outside it. *The Times* commented on this Committee's Report :

> " The figures given show clearly that the need for the investigation set on foot by Mr. Clynes was and is urgent. Different provisions are made for the disciplining of those who deliberately choose a life of crime, those who drift into it, and those whose cases are mainly pathological ; and the whole Report is calculated to make all three classes less likely to persist in a lifelong career of offences against society."

Another Committee which I appointed took in hand the task of considering the training of prisoners for future employment, and the difficulties met by prisoners in obtaining work after their discharge.

It has taken us a long time to realise that people do not, in one case in a hundred, commit a crime if they are free to do otherwise. Time and time again from the dock comes the pathetic plea: "I was hard up!" or "I had to get food somehow," or "I hadn't anything better to do!"

1930 Men coming out of prison often find that employers do not want them. Who is going to give a position of responsibility to the Penitent Thief? Christ believed in his sincerity, but civilisation is not so trusting.

A prisoner has told me that after one or two convictions, he could not get bread save by breaking the law. This is an indictment on society that is not easy to forget.

Two broad lines of reform are urgently needed now with regard to crime. One relates to greater State assistance on release from prison, especially in the matter of finding work and in concealing or removing every vestige of the prison taint. The other line relates entirely to treatment within prison.

Rules concerning conversation should be less rigid. Exercise and games should be increased. More could be done with regard to both entertainment and education.

Favouritism on the part of officers and warders is strongly suspected, and certainly exists in some places.

Flogging and solitary confinement should be abolished. The latter in particular savours of the tortures of the Dark Ages. It leaves an indelible mark on prisoners' minds, and causes the more sensitive to verge towards madness while the more callous sit alone in silence and savagely plan further and more brutal outbursts to solace themselves for the intrusion of these blank and deadly days into their lives.

Statistics published recently show that an increasing number of crimes of brutal violence are committed by men who have previously been treated as incorrigible criminals and punished with solitary confinement.

There are in Britain many men, women and children who never recover from the shock of attack and brutal ill-treatment by burglars or violent criminals. Permanent and pathetic disabilities result from shattered nerves, and numbers of adults to-day bear the deep secret scars of horrible injuries done in childhood or youth.

To the offenders responsible for these cases, what is to be done? These men may have a grievance against the social system, but they have no excuse for nightmare onslaughts against innocent people.

Because of such considerations, Ministers and State officials must carry their heads along with them as well as their hearts. I found in my own case that it was often easier to will certain changes than to provide statutory ways of introducing them. 1930

We have all felt at times what a fine thing it would be to abolish prisons altogether; and then something happens and we call for the police and ask indignantly why they are never on the spot when they are needed!

Our prisons cannot be changed into rest-houses without failing in their purpose. If a prison does not correct and reform, it is not a success. If conditions within it are made so pleasant that the criminal finds there a better home than his own, we might as well save the country the expense of prisons altogether, and send off every offender with a caution.

One of the greatest problems of the Home Office is how to make prisons move with the times, while still keeping them as prisons.

Books appear each year written by persons of refinement on whom prison sentences have been passed. Many of these persons suggest that prison life is a Hell on earth. They are exaggerating, of course, but they are believed. No doubt they suffer more acutely than their inferiors in gaol, but then they had more chance to keep outside the prison walls. No country can run its prisons on the basis of different grades for prisoners of different sensitiveness and class.

It is likely that before long a welcome reform will be accepted in the case of prisoners who have to perform work during their confinement. They will be paid for that work.

1930 I gave a good deal of attention to this subject during my term as Home Secretary. I found it easier to discuss than to settle.

Many prisoners are employed on service which does not produce things that can be sold. Others are engaged in workshops where articles are made that are used in State service. Others, again, clean and maintain the prison themselves.

Fixed payments for so many different kinds of employment is difficult. Prisons are not primarily workshops, but houses of correction. The general principle of payment for prison work, however, ought to be accepted. For it is a bad thing that men should be turned adrift with only a few shillings at the end of a sentence, and should be dependent on charity for help.

The prison authorities are not free agents in the matter of paying inmates. If prisoners were to produce anything that might be competitively sold in the world's markets, there would be a great outcry from employers and workers making similar articles in the outer freedom.

Yet something must be done. It is not reasonable to expect the taxpayer to find ever-increasing moneys for the support of the criminal classes.

Again, a large number of men who are doomed to serve a long term in prison have the sad experience of finding that their previously acquired skill is going daily to rust. It seems criminal indeed to unfit such criminals for useful life later by enforcing idleness on them while in custody, turning skilled watchmakers to navvying, or mathematicians to cleaning out cells. It is inhuman, and it is wasteful.

The country has always been going to the dogs, and it is one of our national habits to work up a periodic indignation on the subject of crime. Without going so far as that, I feel far from satisfied that we are making fast enough progress to justify ourselves in criminal humanity and criminal economics. For it is very wasteful for a country to increase her criminal classes as some are doing ; the peaceful citizen has ultimately to pay for every crime committed.

When at the Home Office, I did what I could. We 1930
learn very slowly by experience, and safety first is the natural tendency in dealing with criminals ; but more can be done yet to give the offenders a decent second chance.

We learn what is necessary by trial and error, and in this case the error may affect the community, or scar solitary human lives beyond redemption. The suggestions I have made do not represent perfection even as I see it, but they go as far as public opinion, Parliament and the prison authorities are likely to approve at present.

Chapter XIII

1929–1931—The Home Office and the Police—Cost and work of the Metropolitan Force—My views on Women Police—Work on the Alien Acts—My contacts with the King—The Queen's knitting—I attend a Royal birth—Celebrations at Glamis—Loss of the R 101—Disagreements about her condition—A Court of Inquiry—Why we decided to abandon airship construction.

I found, while at the Home Office, that a great deal of misunderstanding existed in the country as to the relation between the Home Secretary and the Police.

1930 Much time was wasted by the receipt of correspondence taking for this granted, and making impossible requests to me to interfere in this or that police concern, or to look into some case of alleged injustice by or against the police.

Throughout the country generally, these matters are all controlled by local authorities, though questions may be raised in Parliament by any Member on a matter of abuse of police power, and the Home Secretary must answer such questions as best he can. The appointment of provincial Chief Constables is also subject to Home Office confirmation, but it is somewhat of a formality.

Apart from these powers, the Home Secretary is quite unable to take any action whatever, no matter how many appealing letters may be addressed to him.

The Metropolitan Police are more directly under his control. Nominally, he is their chief authority, but in actual fact many other officers have to be consulted, though the Home Secretary's head is demanded on a platter in the Commons whenever anything untoward happens in the Metropolitan area, no matter whether the responsibility is really his or not. The Irene Savidge case was an example in point, which occurred about a year before I went to the Home Office. 1930

The reason for the control over the Metropolitan Force is that, rather more than a hundred years ago, Sir Robert Peel, the Home Secretary of the time, reorganised the London police system.

London's civil care was previously entrusted to the "Poor Old Charlies," a species of night-watchmen whose existence was more decorative than useful, and to scattered groups of untrained men who were paid out of private or public money to protect life and property. The new "Bobbies," or "Peel-ers," formed the nucleus of the present Metropolitan Police, perhaps the finest and best-trained body of civil guards in the world.

The Peelers were first considered a nuisance, and an enemy of traditional British liberty. Since then, they have established themselves in the public mind as the most serviceable and likeable of all our various bodies of civil servants.

The Metropolitan Force now numbers over 20,000 men and about 1,000 specially trained detectives. It costs the taxpayer approximately £8,000,000 a year, some three-quarters of which goes to police pay. Thus the average per man is only about £300 a year—less than £6 per week. This includes the pay of Commissioners and highly placed officers, so the Metropolitan area receives splendid service at a very low cost.

Compared with the £150,000,000 set aside in a recent Budget for military and naval purposes, the eight millions the Metropolitan Police cost us, does not seem very much; and the policeman's work is, at least, obvious, so that we can see what we get for our money.

The Metropolitan Force safeguards over 8,000,000 people, and property worth nearly £100,000,000, in an area covering about 800 square miles. It brings about 15,000 cases into the courts each year, half of which are not serious. About £500,000 worth of property is stolen each year in London, but about half of it is eventually recovered by the police.

Less murders are committed in London in an average year than in any other great capital city in the world.

A small margin of the cost of the Metropolitan Force goes towards the upkeep of Women Police. I think a number of policewomen should be attached to every Force throughout the country, to investigate concerning women prisoners and undertake preventive duty of a kind specially suited to women. In the Arcos Raid, girl employees were detained in the company of policemen for several hours, and questions were subsequently asked in the House on the subject.

In the Savidge case to which I have referred, Miss Savidge was subjected to several hours' cross-examination by men, and the matter was later the subject of debate in the Commons.

There should certainly be more policewomen to handle such investigations.

1930 In connection with my duties as Head of the Metropolitan Police, I came into contact frequently with the Alien Regulations, and gave much time to a study of their effects. I became convinced that in many cases there was an indefensible persecution of people whose only sin was their nationality, and who were compelled by economic reasons or by personal misfortune to move from one country to another.

I did much to cheapen and simplify the steps which could be taken in this country to secure British nationality, after sufficient proof had been provided of suitability for that considerable change.

On the other hand, I felt—and still feel—that legislation should be introduced to prevent the dangerous inflex into this country of undesirable foreign women, who go through a form of marriage with some complacent stranger whom they perhaps never see again, and thus cheaply acquire full rights of British citizenship and considerable immunity against police efforts to curb their loose behaviour about our streets and parks.

Throughout my duties regarding police matters, I did what I could to encourage a better spirit of co-operation between the various ranks, and to make it possible for constables to rise high in their profession by diligence and skill. Various police protests and one or two strikes have occurred because it has been felt from time to time that authority in the Force was becoming too militarised. 1930

After I had left the Home Office, a new Commissioner with a fine military record inaugurated some regulations which he felt would smarten up the Metropolitan Police along lines which he had proved effective in certain crack regiments.

One of his new rules was that policemen were not to move the chinstraps of their helmets about, as they had been in the habit of doing so as to avoid developing a white line where the leather protected their sunburned skins. The men have always objected to such a line, since it clearly shows " the policeman in mufti," on holidays and similar occasions when he wants to forget his work.

The new regulation was not obeyed ; and in an endeavour to force his will on the constables, the Commissioner ordered a slight shortening of the chinstraps of all new helmets, so that they were too tight to be conveniently moved about. There followed an amusing instance of the way in which ingenuity can triumph in a human battle of wits.

As the new helmets were issued, policemen all over London might have been seen furtively biting their chinstraps, thus softening the leather and making it possible to move the straps about as before. The Commissioner was very pleased with his perspicacity in frustrating the men, and did not notice that !

When the facts of this case eventually reached George V, through a roundabout channel, he was very much amused, and the Commissioner never learned of the men's ingenious move from him or anyone else. Certainly, I always found the King possessed of a most human outlook when it fell to my duty to take police affairs to him for report and discussion. He was considerate of all points of view, and considering his own sheltered position he had a wonderful intuition of the grievances and pinpricks suffered by others.

During my years as Home Secretary, my work brought me often into contact with him, and I was surprised at this trait in one whose every movement and emotion was guarded by hundreds of servants from the slightest unpleasantness.

1930 I well remember standing near the King at the Cenotaph during an Armistice Day service while we were in office. His Majesty never forgot his part in the dread responsibility of having, in 1914, signed a decree which declared his people at war and sent millions to their deaths, and the sight of the Cenotaph always affected him.

Nor did he ever forget to help, where he could, the dependents of those who died in that grim and useless struggle. On this occasion, after the service was over, he was told of a poor woman from Lancashire who had placed a tiny wreath of wild ivy among the splendid floral tributes at the base of the Empty Tomb.

Later still it came to His Majesty's notice, as a result of inquiries, that this woman was the widow of a man who had died of war wounds some years after hostilities ended. Through some technical disability, she had been unable to obtain any pension, and after her husband's death she had been forced to exist precariously on earnings which sometimes did not leave her enough for bread.

Yet she had somehow saved enough for the journey to London on Armistice Day, to lay her little tribute among the others in memory of a man whose life had been so miserably thrown away as a sacrifice to the armament-producing merchants of death.

By King George's orders, arrangements were made

THE HOME SECRETARY LEAVING THE CENOTAPH
WITH THE LATE KING GEORGE V

that this poor woman should receive regular assistance, and so one more was added to the number of the unchronicled dependents who are given bounty from the King's privy purse. 1930

The public has very little idea of the many ways in which the royal family do good by stealth, or indeed of some of the more public efforts they have made, at various times, to play an intimate part in the struggles and trials of their people.

I recall, for instance, an occasion in 1918, when I was Food Controller, when I received a command, which applied also to Mrs. Clynes, to go and stay at Windsor Castle.

It might be supposed, perhaps, that a king whose meals were assured would not have taken any vital interest in rationing. The contrary was the case. King George was greatly interested in the details of the food distribution system, and was eager for knowledge of how administrative machinery could be perfected to make safe and equitable the supply of two or three meals a day for his forty million people. The King and his Household, of course, were all rationed, and had their ration-cards the same as the rest of us.

His Majesty told me of his uneasiness in case any serious or prolonged food shortage created panic in the country and disaster among the fighting forces.

Of the dinner to which we sat down after our talk I would only say that it was fit for a king's table—in wartime. It was a very plain meal, of few courses, which included neither luxury nor waste. The conditions which many subjects had to endure in the War period were not unknown at Windsor Castle.

The lawns outside, which had been almost reverently tended by generations of gardeners until they resembled green velvet more than mere grass, had been ruthlessly dug up and turned into large plots for food growing. During an inspection of these plots, Queen Mary and Mrs. Clynes discussed the relative merits of various vegetables being grown there.

The comment of Mrs. Clynes on this experience was that Her Majesty's knowledge in the matter was high enough to qualify her for the post of Superintendent Gardener, while she was also comprehensively informed as to the best ways of cooking and serving vegetable dishes attractively.

She took a great personal interest in the Food Kitchens which we opened during the War years ; and in King George's lifetime her interest in household affairs was shown even on the menus of State banquets, on which "Queen Mary Strawberry Puffs" were sometimes announced.

Mrs. Clynes was delighted by the homeliness of the Queen, and was put at ease at once by Her Majesty's friendly way of talking, and the sincere interest she displayed in questions about Mrs. Clynes' war work, and about our family.

At that time my wife, like most other women, was doing a lot of knitting for the soldiers, but of course she never dreamed of getting out her work at Windsor Castle. She was therefore all the more surprised and pleased to find that the first thing the Queen did, after dinner when she and Mrs. Clynes went to the Drawing Room, was to pick up from the corner of a settee on which they were sitting—a bag from which she took out some knitting !

1930 A contact with the Royal Family came within my experience while I was Home Secretary which had an unusual personal as well as historic interest. I received a notification one day at the Home Office that I should be required, between certain dates, to be available to go instantly, at any hour of the night or day, to Glamis Castle, to attend a royal birth.

When a son was born to James II of England, it was suggested throughout the country that interested political and clerical parties had arranged, by threats and bribery, for a royal birth to be "faked" so that a Catholic child might be introduced into St. James's Palace, and a Catholic succession assured.

This tale grew so gigantic that, in the end, it played the leading part in causing the revolution which sent King James packing overseas, ended the Stuart dynasty, and brought over from Holland the Protestant ancestor of our present line of kings.

The story of the faked birth has since been completely disproved, and most contemporary writers allude to the striking likeness of the "Old Pretender" to the rest of the royal Stuarts. But the suggestion had been made and had toppled a king from his throne; and to make sure that no substitution or faking ever took place in the future, a law was passed saying that the Home Secretary should attend all royal births, whenever the infant was one who might at any future date become a claimant to the British throne.

Thus a trusted representative of the Commons would be able to assure himself that all royal heirs were of undisputed blood.

In 1930, the Duke and Duchess of York, as they then were, expected the birth of a second child. Between that child and the throne there were then three direct claimants, apart from King George himself, who was still reigning, and any heirs the then Prince of Wales might have.

To-day, the little Princess whose birth I attended is the second figure in the British royal succession. One can easily see, therefore, how necessary it is to extend the ceremony beyond the actual monarch's immediate successors.

The birth was arranged at Glamis in the hope that 1930 undesired publicity would be avoided. Unfortunately enough the picturesque nature of the ceremonies with which the loyal Scottish tenants of Macbeth's ancient estate proposed to celebrate the occasion attracted visitors, not only from this country, but from other parts of the world.

The estate had eventually to be put almost in a condition of siege, and some of the sensation-mongering tourists who came crowding towards Glamis Castle, in the hope of obtaining photographs of the grey old building, were roughly treated by dour tenantry trying to protect their beloved mistress from annoyance.

I travelled to Scotland in due course, and stayed a few miles from Glamis as the guest of Lady Airlie, a famous Highland society figure, whose welcome was typical of the most hospitable country in the world. I made a number of Scottish friends, and remained near Glamis awaiting my call to duty there.

Presently I was informed that I was required at the Castle. A few minutes after the little Princess had been born, a doctor came down to me and asked me to go to an ante-room, where the present King, the child's grandmother, another doctor, some nurses, and a few privileged persons were waiting.

There I was shown the baby girl who might one day be a queen. She was lying perfectly still and evidently content, in a cot, her wide-open eyes looking with apparent interest at the strange new world, and at the persons some of whom may perhaps be numbered one day among her subjects.

After leaving the Castle, it was my duty to make out a certificate of the birth, and to send telegrams informing certain important persons, among whom was the Lord Mayor of London. This dignitary, immediately on receipt of my telegram, would have ordered the great bell of St. Paul's to be rung—it is rung only on the occasion of a royal birth or death.

1930 The thought occurred to me at the time that this ceremony of the attendance of the Home Secretary at a royal birth does not fulfil its original object, and, though it is of considerable historic interest, might perhaps be discontinued. It is naturally impossible for any one but the doctors concerned to certify to whom the newly born infant belongs ; the Secretary of State cannot do it, yet he has to spend perhaps several days (as in my case) away from the Home Office and the duties that the country is paying him to perform.

I was told later, though whether this is correct or not

Keystone View Co.

MR. CLYNES WITH LADY AIRLIE IN SCOTLAND AT THE TIME OF PRINCESS MARGARET ROSE'S BIRTH

I cannot say, that the present Queen's choice of a name for the baby was the Scottish " Margaret," and the King's the English " Rose," and that they prefer both names to be used together so as to be fair to both the countries which claim the little Princess as their own. In any case, the departure from the few conventional names commonly employed for royal babies has proved universally popular, and Princess Margaret Rose has since received some touching spontaneous greetings of affection and loyalty when she has appeared in public.

Great celebrations took place on the Glamis Castle estate after the birth, and Strathmore was made vivid that night with the red glow of a hundred bonfires, while sturdy kilted men with flaming torches ran like gnomes from place to place through the darkness.

I had hardly returned to the Home Office after this northern visit when my colleagues and myself were shocked to receive the news that our Air Minister, Lord Thomson, and our Director of Civil Aviation, Sir Sefton Brancker, together with forty-six others, had lost their lives in one of the worst flying disasters ever known. Leading air officials of most of the European countries have paid with their lives for their interest in flying, but until the autumn of 1930 Britain had always retained a comfortable feeling of safety in mechanical affairs.

The airship R 101 was originally designed for use on an Indian service. But it was found during her first trials that she could lift only 35 tons instead of 60 tons, as had been hoped, and a number of alterations were made.

In the trials which followed, it was discovered that the gasbags in the great airship's hull chafed against the framework, and that the valves were not satisfactory, having a dangerous tendency to leak when the ship rolled in bad weather.

Some weeks before the last fatal trip started, the airship 1930 developed a split 140 feet long in her outer skin. This was mended ; but a second split appeared next day. This was also repaired. In trials after this, she seemed sluggish and unwieldy. However, early in October, she carried out some long flights, and was passed by air experts as being absolutely fit to take the voyage to India.

Certain disagreements developed, it being suggested by some members of the Government that the airship should receive more comprehensive trials, and by others that the political situation in India was such that any unnecessary delay in making the flight—which had been widely announced in advance—might be unwise, as turbulent native elements would attribute the change to the displeasure of Providence against us.

In the end the decision was left entirely to the airship experts, without any attempts at persuasion. On their advice, the great ship set off from Cardington aerodrome on the evening of October 4th, with many distinguished passengers on board, including several of the cleverest airship experts in the world.

The long silver shape passed over the French coast shortly before midnight, and observers stated that she was nosing her way into the teeth of a wild gale, rolling doggedly along under racing black clouds.

1930 At two o'clock the next morning the inhabitants of the little French town of Beauvais were awakened by the thunderous throbbing of engines immediately above their roofs. There was a howling gale, and rain was coming down in sheets.

Immediately afterwards the R 101 dived violently earthwards. Somehow she was brought back to an even keel, but she refused to climb, and Coxwain Hunt, staring through a plate-glass porthole into the black and gusty void, suddenly saw the dim, colossal shape of a hill-side loom immediately ahead.

" We're down, lads ! " he yelled.

A few men, awakened by that awful warning, heard almost simultaneously the metal framework of the airship's nose grinding gently into the earth.

There followed a *fuff* of flame, and an instant explosive roar as the hydrogen from the tattered gasbags mixed with air to make a gas as dangerous as dynamite. Within a few seconds the graceful giant of the skies was changed to a mass of red-hot, writhing girders, and forty-eight of the fifty-four passengers had passed from sleep to death.

After Cabinet discussions, we appointed a Court of Inquiry, under Sir John Simon, to investigate the causes of the disaster. German and British airship experts gave evidence and advanced theories, but the Court could do nothing to restore life to the charred bodies on the Beauvais hill-side.

Eventually, it was proved that the loss had been caused by leakage from the forward gasbags, owing to the terrible weather met by the airship. The leaking gas apparently escaped to the tail, flinging it upwards while the nose fell still more. Loss of altitude and incorrect suppositions about height led to the final crash when the ship failed to rise over a hill.

After this tragedy, which shocked the whole flying 1930 world, the Government decided to abandon the construction of airships. We were a good deal criticised, and the more when Germany and the United States, our great rivals in the world carrying trade, continued to build lighter-than-air dirigibles. But we had examined the problem thoroughly, and come to the conclusion that the future of flying lay with the heavier-than-air machine, and that airships could never be safe in storms, but must inevitably become the mighty playthings of a mightier Nature.

Since that day, disasters to United States airships and to the *Hindenburg*, pride and wonder of all who used the skyways, have gone far to prove that we were right in our decision.

Chapter XIV

1929–1931—Labour Government difficulties—The biggest conference since Versailles—Snowden and Reparations—Agreement with Russia—Tackling unemployment—Raising the school-leaving age—Mosley leaves the Government—His " new party "—Labour Budgets—The German Chancellor visits the King—War debts moratorium suggested—MacDonald in Berlin—Baldwin's Vote of Censure—My Bill for Sunday entertainments—Militarism at the Cenotaph—The 1931 crisis begins.

My work at the Home Office was only one department of the activities of the Labour Government, and while I was busy there, 1930 Snowden, Henderson, MacDonald and the rest were facing an ever more menacing threat of world financial collapse.

Our two years in office were darkened by this increasing terror. It seemed as though civilisation was slowly disintegrating. America was staggering towards ruin ; Germany, Austria and other European countries were struggling with nightmare debts and fantastic coinages ; workmen on the Continent were earning each week sums which, before the War, would have meant great fortunes, yet did not suffice at the time to buy bread.

When Britain deserted the Gold Standard, most of our business men regarded the change as a thunderclap for which there had been no warning. In reality we held many Cabinets discussing the gravity of world affairs, and did many things which helped to avert the weight of the coming blow from our country ; and time after time, Labour Ministers warned an unheeding country of approaching trouble.

In 1930, Henderson, Snowden and a staff of financial experts went to the Hague to attend a vital conference—the biggest since Versailles—to discuss war reparations and world finance.

This Conference was very nearly wrecked by disagreements between France, Italy and England, as to who should have the lion's share of the shrinking reparations that our wartime enemies were still able to pay. At one stage, Philip Snowden, a small, bitter, dogged figure, stood out against the combined weight of the greatest statesmen in Europe, and gained from the foreign Press the grudging tribute of "The Iron Chancellor."

Not until he had threatened to leave the Hague and its wranglings did he get more or less his own way. 1930 Then, reparations were agreed upon far below the figures demanded by France, and more in line with what Germany and Austria could pay. But, even then, the estimate was too high, and the result of subsequent attempts to collect the money nearly involved us all in financial ruin.

When Snowden returned at last to London, he was greeted with a mixture of delight and dismay, but the die was cast and Europe was one step nearer to the crisis of 1931.

Henderson negotiated an agreement with Russia to continue diplomatic relations and to foster fresh trade between the two countries. This temporarily relieved British unemployment; but world trade was shrinking, and new business with one extra country could only partially help us.

We reached a point where we had over two million people out of work—a terrible total for the two million, but one very creditable to Britain in view of world figures. Germany, for instance, had over four million workless; the United States, seven million, which later grew to more than double that number.

Unemployment on this scale is a condition which increases like some contaminating disease. The workless man can only buy a bare minimum of food and clothes, and no luxuries ; thus millions of other workers find the demand for their goods slowly vanishing, and many of them, in their turn, are finally added to the queues outside unemployment offices and factory gates.

Moreover, countries with many unemployed are not making enough goods to export, and cannot afford to import according to their real needs. Thus international commerce shrinks, credits fail, and chaos develops.

1930 In an endeavour to stimulate trade within the country and the Empire, we decided to extend several public utility schemes, assist agricultural and industrial development in the depressed areas, and saction large loans to certain of our Colonies and Protectorates.

To relieve unemployment, we proposed a step which we had long desired for other reasons—that of raising the school-leaving age from fourteen to fifteen. Anyone who has had much to do with young people must have realised that numbers of them leave school quite inadequately educated for the intensive struggle for bread to which modern life has reduced millions of our population. Our alteration in the school-leaving age was calculated not only to relieve unemployment caused by such children being unable to find work, but also to make impossible the worst kind of misemployment—by which fourteen-year-olds were obliged to work for long hours at wages which did not keep them in clothes, while at the same time keeping older people out of jobs.

It has been suggested since that we might have raised the age by two years or more instead of one.

However ideal a reform may be the economic aspect has to be considered. Many working-class families would find it an unbearable strain to have to keep at school until sixteen children who would otherwise be assisting by contributions from their work towards the family income. We want to educate our young people, but we do not wish to starve the old ones in order to do it too quickly.

I am strongly of the opinion that there should be no big change made in the school-leaving age until maintenance money is assured to make further increases possible by sensible degrees.

One of the members of the Government who tried to tackle the growing unemployment problem was J. H. Thomas. He knew from personal experience what it meant to be out of work, and, whatever his faults Thomas was warm-hearted and eager to help his own class in a very difficult task. 1930

Sir Oswald Mosley, who was then acting as Thomas's assistant Minister, together with George Lansbury and Tom Johnston, decided that their Chief's way with unemployment was not quick enough. Mosley drew up some quite fantastic proposals and submitted these to the Cabinet.

We considered them for some time, in an honest endeavour to make sense of what appeared to many of us something approaching insanity in the then condition of financial affairs. Eventually we rejected the proposals altogether, and Mosley immediately resigned.

In the House of Commons at one time, Sir Oswald Mosley was among its best speakers. He is a very good orator, but a very bad judge.

Who else would have tried to establish in Britain a new political party with a foreign name, a foreign symbol and manner, a foreign garb, and a membership less trained to think than to salute and march and deliberately throw away a civilian style for a militarised one ?

Sometimes an educated man will reveal the greatest degree of ignorance. Any illiterate youth might have guessed the outcome of these non-British antics !

I never had reason to doubt Mosley until he resigned from the Labour Government over this unemployment issue. He won our goodwill and applause after that, when at a large meeting of his fellow-Members in the House of Commons, at which I was present, he explained his reasons for disagreement, and insisted that they would not affect his wish to remain ever a loyal member of the Labour Party.

Almost immediately, however, we discovered that he was busy trying to form a "New Party" of his own.

Every one knows now that in a short public life he has joined and left every political body except one—the Communists—to whom he now offers special and inspired opposition. No doubt their turn will come—and perhaps meantime he can afford the high cost of his adventures.

In 1596 a Mr. Oswald Mosley bought the land on which much of Manchester now stands, for £3,500. In 1846 the town of Manchester bought the manor and all the rights and incidents from the family for £200,000.

The present Sir Oswald, the sixth baronet to bear the name, inherited a fortune of £247,000 from the late baroness; from his grandfather, he received £60,000 more. In 1920 he married Lady Cynthia Curzon, daughter of the late Lord Curzon and granddaughter of Levi Leiter, the Chicago millionaire. She, too, was wealthy. At the wedding two kings and two queens were present.

I doubt whether they believed the bridegroom to be a future king-maker like his continental prototypes; nor do I think him one now. Though I am a Labour man, I prefer a constitutional monarch to any dictator, no matter whether his shirt be black, red, green or blue.

The two Labour Budgets were drawn up with the unemployment problem largely in mind; but we could not do what we wished, for Britain was in the position wretchedly familiar to many a working-woman at that time of having an increasing family to feed on a dwindling income.

Our first Budget was received with a good deal of uneasiness. Certain Conservative interests in the City and the Shires professed terror lest the dreadful Capital Levy might be brought into force, or nationalisation of the banks and great industries attempted. Perhaps they 1930 had reasons for their fears. Only our lack of power in the Commons to carry through such measures prevented our starting the work. They remain an integral part of our policy. Until these reforms are carried out, the evil of widespread unemployment will be always with us.

When it came to facts, the 1930 Budget was not a revolutionary one. Income-tax was increased, and so was surtax, and the duty on beer. First steps were taken towards land taxation, but subsequent resistance nullified them. There was fierce Tory opposition to the income-tax increases, also, and on two or three occasions during the Budget discussions, the Government barely escaped defeat.

Our 1931 Budget was but little more alarming, despite a deficit of £23,000,000 from the previous year, almost entirely caused by the shrinkage of world trade. Petrol-tax was raised ; money was obtained from the Dollar Exchange Account ; and it was decided to obtain temporary financial relief by calling in most of the income-tax in the first half of the financial year. Apart from these measures, there was nothing unusual in either Budget.

Philip Snowden subsequently received a lot of 1930 criticism because, in face of a coming economic blizzard, he was unable to do more than formulate these two unexciting Budgets. No man could have done more. Indeed, world conditions were such in 1930–31 that any effort on the part of the British Exchequer to make a sensational move would have resulted inevitably in toppling the trembling pound into the gutter where the German mark and the Austrian krone had already fallen.

During the early summer of 1931 Dr. Brüning, the German Chancellor, came to London, and visited the King at Buckingham Palace, and MacDonald at Chequers. He placed some startling revelations before us concerning the imminence of German financial difficulties, and suggested a European financial Conference at Geneva as soon as it could be arranged.

Already the world was shivering on the brink of the abyss, and during those drowsy summer days telephone wires hummed between the great European banking houses, and diplomats hurried from office to office with grave faces. Secret reports were presented before leading statesmen in various of the powerful countries of the world, and all sorts of measures were taken to try to stave off the approaching money disaster.

President Hoover announced that the United States was willing to allow a year's postponement of all war debt payments if all European countries would do the same. We were willing enough, but once more France was unwilling.

In July, Henderson and the Prime Minister went to Berlin, after certain credits had been arranged to buttress Germany's shaking finance. They saw Hindenburg, and met some of the German bankers, but beyond being impressed anew with the gravity of the European situation, nothing of much practical value took place.

The year 1931 was one of great difficulties for the Government. We were defeated once or twice early in the year, and an Economy Debate wasted much time without reaching any useful conclusions. We experienced great difficulty in passing necessary legislation to extend the borrowing power of the Insurance Fund by £20,000,000, to meet unemployment payments.

1931 In April Mr. Baldwin himself moved a Vote of Censure on the Government "for its failure to carry out its election pledges." Yet we had successfully carried into operation eight of the eleven points we promised to the electorate; while two others had been frustrated by the Tories themselves! I wonder how many Conservative Governments could claim as high a list of unbroken promises? His censure vote was defeated by fifty-four votes.

We struggled on, handicapped by Tory criticism, crippled by opposition in the Lords, and unable to introduce any other substantial reforms because we were outnumbered in the Commons by the Tories and Liberals, who had by this time joined forces in all but name.

Slum clearance went steadily forward, and thousands of new houses were built each year. By this time the

Daily Sketch

MR. CLYNES WITH THE LATE SIR HALL CAINE AT A GARDEN PARTY

house-shortage was under control, almost entirely due to Labour measures in 1924 and in 1929 and 1930.

Britain was also developing a system of arterial roads, planned by Labour experts, which, when they are concluded, will be the finest in Europe. We had planned these roads with an eye to the future, making generous bridges, fine widths of surface, and lasting foundations. They were planted on both sides with young trees, and lighting in towns was to be brought up to date within a few years, so that in the end the road system will be as safe, useful and beautiful as anything of its kind in the world.

The vast increase of motor traffic with consequent choking of town streets and danger to pedestrians gave us a good deal of concern, and various proposals to improve conditions were mooted in Cabinet discussions.

During 1931, I introduced a Bill in response to pressing demands to legalise Sunday entertainments, including the opening of cinemas on that day. This provided a lively sideline to my Home Office work, and was only passed into law after a good deal of debate in the House.

After this, a town or particular area could decide by 1931 ballot whether it wanted Sunday entertainments or not, and there have since been a few local agitations concerning such ballots. The contests have usually been between religious organisations and men having business interests in entertainment.

My Bill, of course, affected the preferences of millions of people, but in keeping with our national habit decisions have been reached since with only one or two odd instances of public excitement. One side would allege that the Act was a desecration of the Sabbath, and the other that the absence of the Act was a wicked limitation of liberty and a cruelty to weary workers to whom Sunday is the only full day in which they can get amusement.

During the time I had the Bill in hand, rival interests approached me with deputations and assailed me with appeals and circulars, while the legitimate stage, led by actors and actresses of great distinction, demanded the right to open theatres on Sunday if picture houses could do so.

The general result has once more shown that what is foretold by agitated prophets seldom happens.

To this part of my subject I may add that while at the Home Office I paid one or two visits to the circus, 1931 and found myself scathingly denounced for doing so, because it was said that I encouraged exhibitions of performing animals—though as a fact that feature of circus life exerted little influence on anything I did.

Some bitterness, also, was shown over my attitude towards the annual service at the Cenotaph. It is one of the yearly responsibilities of the Home Office, and what I feel regarding it I also feel with respect to all like ceremonies and services held on Armistice Day throughout the land.

Such assemblies sprung from emotions which filled the minds of millions when the Great War was brought to an end. It was natural that the close of this period of human blunder and catastrophe should be thought a fit occasion for thanksgiving and worship. The relief of the moment was indescribable, and people thought less in terms of conquering heroes than in the mood of men and women who had been delivered from the Valley of the Shadow.

But the Cenotaph services, beginning humbly and in chastened mood, soon grew into vulgar military displays. Soldiers and sailors tramped past in uniform, carrying their deadly weapons to show their readiness at any moment for another war. The commands and raucous shouts of officers rose high above the murmurs of supplication, grief and prayer.

The assembled multitudes on Armistice Day could then be classed not as worshippers forming parts of a congregation, but as sightseers witnessing the pomp and pride of a menacing military review. With each succeeding year, they remind us more that " We've got the men, we've got the guns, we've got the money, too ! " rather than that we are mourning a slaughter of innocents caused by Homeric folly and Luciferian pride.

During my time at the Home Office, I did what I could to increase the civilian and religious aspect of these services, and to diminish the number of troops and lessen the military movements and warlike display employed.

It was not an easy task. The generals were stolidly against me, and there was an honest belief in other State departments that the memories of the men who had died to end war could most appropriately be honoured by the military manœuvres of similar men uniformed and armed in preparation for the next war.

I found, as is often the case in matters of national interest, that the head of one State department is obliged to consult many other Ministers who may be indirectly concerned in the proposed change.

I would have liked to prevent the use of weapons altogether at Cenotaph ceremonies. I was unable to do that, but at the end of my efforts I could look with some satisfaction at the results. The militarisation of the Cenotaph service had been reduced to something distantly resembling a Thanksgiving Service instead of a Victory March.

For my pains I received a considerable amount of abuse, particularly from young people who had been at school while I was at the Food Ministry during the War, and who were confident that they understood state-craft fully.

In the summer of 1931, I was much criticised for various measures with which I had been associated. But as the weeks passed, my personal difficulties were overshadowed by the approach of a crisis which threatened not only the existence of the British Labour Party, but also the financial future of the world. 1931

Chapter XV

1931—Facing economic disaster—The May Report—Critical Cabinets—MacDonald's assurances before the break—Baldwin visits No. 10—The King recalled from Balmoral—He sees MacDonald— MacDonald turns renegade—Returning my seals of office—Forming the " National " Government—" The Boneless Wonder "—Gold draining out of the country—Foreign Budget deficits—Measures to meet the crisis fail—£10,000,000 goes overseas in one day.

The last day of July, 1931, was a black date for Britain. It was the concluding day of the Parliamentary session, and after discussion in the Cabinet it was decided that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should issue in the Commons a serious warning of the economic troubles that had been threatening for the past twelve months, and that had now almost come to a head. He said :

1931

> " I tell the House quite frankly that the outlook for the Budget of next year, unless very considerable economies can be effected, is a very grave prospect indeed."

It was necessary to make this disclosure, and it would have had a sufficiently disturbing effect in Europe by itself. But on the same day, a report was issued by the Committee on National Economy, of which Sir George May, the insurance and finance expert, was Chairman. This Committee had been set up on Cabinet advice some months earlier, when it became obvious that abnormal methods would have to be employed to meet the growing demands on the nation's purse.

The Committee's report stated that the new loans to the Unemployment Fund were dangerously straining our financial resources, and that the next Budget, instead of showing a surplus as had been hoped, would have to meet a deficiency of at least £120,000,000.

Private individuals can apparently live beyond their means for years and suffer no ill effect, but if nations attempt to do so they face bankruptcy and ruin.

It was unfortunate that the May Report was issued on the day that the House adjourned for the holidays. Before any action could be taken, the details of our national peril, deliberately distorted into something monstrous by Parliamentarians who saw in it a new mint for Party capital, were causing concern up and down the land.

Thus the Labour Party was made a scapegoat for a condition of world affairs which was no more our responsibility than a thunderstorm might be. 1931

We have in the history of the Party suffered no greater misfortune than that of being obliged to take office on the threshold of the worst world depression since the War. It rolled over Europe and reached America. That vast country, which had laughed at European unemployment and economic distress, suddenly found herself burdened with fifteen million out-of-works, and a staggering dislocation of economic life.

Mr. Churchill himself described the Government at this time as " having to face an economic blizzard." Faster than our best plans could put an unemployed worker in a job, half a dozen were thrown out by world trade stagnation.

Every week the figures went up, and every day the Tory Party made capital out of that melancholy result. When we argued that the depression was the inevitable result of the War, and would follow any modern war they laughed uproariously, though Mr. Runciman himself admitted :

> " The prime financial difficulties of all Europe are due to the War, and chiefly to the continuous payment of excessive reparations."

Our political opponents said that the fault was ours, and that we were driving the country to bankruptcy. They said it so often and so loud that, in the end, foreign investors listened and believed. The cry intended to embarrass a Party nearly wrecked a nation's credit.

The basis of the whole trouble was that we, while in office, borrowed 120 millions for use as Unemployment Benefit. This policy of borrowing was not started by us. The Tories themselves began it years before. When they had commenced it, we dared not stop it. They knew we should have had revolution to cope with had we done so.

We promoted schemes for public work that provided employment for about 400,000 men. But meanwhile swiftly shrinking foreign trade threw far more than that number out of work. It was like trying to stop an incoming tide with a sand barrier.

1931 Meanwhile, our borrowing was held up as an altogether more dreadful and vicious thing than Tory borrowing. The terrors of a national money collapse were vigorously paraded by certain office-seekers, and a few million people were deluded to the length of believing that the comparatively small debt of 120 millions due to beneficient social aid would ruin a country that had shouldered the debts of thousands of millions which the war had cost, and had not then been in the least perturbed!

The Cabinet sat day after day. During this critical time, two men counted for much in our meetings—MacDonald as Prime Minister and Snowden as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I would not question the sincerity of Mr. Snowden, however bitterly he later on fought against us. He was badly frightened by the financial outlook, and alarmed by the attitude of the Bankers, who had firmly made up their minds to have us out of office.

Snowden's honesty was shown by the fact that after the new Government was formed he threw up his well-paid post within a year, on finding that every principle he held dear in politics was being deliberately betrayed. He then sent MacDonald the most stinging letter of resignation which I should think one colleague has ever addressed to another.

Mr. MacDonald in those last days gave assurances to us which were totally opposed to his later actions. Snowden has stressed this point in writing.

He repeated again and again that there would be no new Party formed, and no election. He said that a few statesmen of peculiar abilities would assemble for a special piece of financial work which might last about six weeks, and that then all would revert to their former positions.

He refused to face his obvious duty of meeting his Parliamentary colleagues who had elected him as their leader. He declined to go to the House of Commons with us, there to reveal the Labour plans for dealing with the crisis. When put to the test on any of these specific points, he ran away.

On August 11th he was visited by the King's Private Secretary and a long discussion was held as to the country's financial condition and the unchecked outflow of gold. Wild rumours went flying through the City.

The Cabinet met the following day, but MacDonald 1931
was reticent as to what had really been discussed. Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Neville Chamberlain visited the Prime Minister, giving a theatrical air of coming catastrophe. Some of us now began to feel very uneasy at all this parleying with the other Party, though that anything could happen so astounding as our Prime Minister changing sides when the power changed sides, we could hardly yet conceive.

Day after day, the Cabinet met to plod through fantastic figures, listen to expert opinions, and draw up a workmanlike scheme for tackling the crisis. MacDonald applauded hollowly when our proposals were mooted, but his mind was apparently elsewhere, and sometimes he answered entirely at random.

Many quite imaginary versions of these Cabinet discussions found their way into the Press, and have since appeared in pseudo-reliable reference books. The worst of these versions was that we agreed to reduce Unemployment pay, and to impose wage reductions, as part of the economies proposed by Labour to tackle the depression.

I declare emphatically that these statements are untrue. Such proposals were discussed in the course of Cabinet debates, among a group of items which had been submitted to us for consideration. We unhesitatingly refused to approve them. Had they been agreed upon, as has been stated, by a majority of the Cabinet, why did we then resign rather than enforc them? The very idea is an absurdity.

One of the first men to nail this lie was Willie Graham, who had long served at the Treasury with Snowden. In a House of Commons speech, Graham was most emphatic in declaring that no such suggestion had ever for one moment been accepted.

On August 21st the General Council of the T.U.C. advised the strongest opposition to any cut in unemployment pay, and this view we shared.

1931 Next day, the King left for Balmoral on a holiday, but was on his way back to London, answering an urgent call, within twelve hours of his arrival. Two hours after he reached Buckingham Palace again, MacDonald went to see him there. After that interview, an eye-witness who saw the Prime Minister leave the Palace gates said that "he emerged with the face of a doomed man." Nor do I believe that he has ever been very happy from that day.

The Bank Rate was increased, and French and United States credits were granted to sustain the value of the £ on the world's money exchanges. But things had gone too far to be affected by such temporary remedies.

Baldwin and Samuel went to see the King, immediately following MacDonald's visit. Meanwhile, our leader was still reassuring us with every breath that there would be no change in the Government.

Late on a Sunday evening, while the Cabinet was in session, the Prime Minister suddenly and dramatically changed his attitude. Disagreement developed, and it was finally made obvious to some of us that we had two choices. MacDonald proposed to abandon the Unemployed and lead a desertion into the enemy's camp. We could either follow him—or we should have to resign our posts.

Snowden and Thomas went with him, the former not without grave doubts. Thomas, however, did not believe it to be in the nation's interest that he should resign. It was reported at the time that after leaving the Cabinet room Thomas announced that : "There is to be a National Government and I am to be in it."

Lord Sankey, who also followed his leader, was the only Minister who went to meet his colleagues at a representative Labour meeting, to explain his action. He said that he felt it his duty to remain at his post, and we know that he had particular obligations at the time in regard to India. We knew he had sacrificed much for Labour.

He did not persuade the meeting that he was right in the course he proposed to pursue, but he won our regard for his frankness and fearlessness, and our respect for him as a man of honour has never been lowered.

1931 It is not possible to say the same of others. Following MacDonald's declaration, there came a sequel of political desertion and realignment that has no parallel in modern history. Men have, of course, changed their side with their convictions, but the 1931 affair was hardly that.

Some of us preferred to stand by the people who had put us in power. We realised clearly at the time that it could have been worth our while, from a financial viewpoint, to turn traitor to Labour, to swallow our principles, and become the docile puppets of those who oppose the claims of our class.

I lost, I suppose, very much in position and salary, rather than agree to reduce the unemployed man's pay by some shillings a week. I preferred to lose anything personally rather than my self-respect and happiness. I claim no credit now for being faithful to Labour pledges.

When we left Downing Street late that night, after we had come somehow to a decision which it was obvious would split our Party from top to bottom and sink the Labour Government, I received an unforgettable impression as we crowded into the dim-lit street. The faces of my colleagues showed every sort of emotion—triumph, astonishment, contempt, avarice and despair.

That night, MacDonald was visited by his new henchmen, Baldwin and Samuel, who no doubt received from him a dramatic account of the day's changes. Next afternoon, he went to the King to discuss the formation of a new Government and a new Party, with himself still at the head.

When we went to the Palace to hand in our seals of office to George V, the atmosphere was solemn and funereal. There was no talk. We entered His Majesty's study one by one, carrying our seals in small red boxes. The King stood beside a table, one hand resting upon it. His face looked grey and lined. I placed my seal on the table, bowed, and silently took my leave.

1931 Baldwin, Samuel, and the echo that was MacDonald, got to work at once to form a new Cabinet. It was called "National." Its successor is still called national by a few; but the Tories themselves have shaken off their pretence with their own laughter at it.

MacDonald was degraded from his high place as leader of the Labour Party, and I was asked to succeed him. I did not wish to do so, as others deserved the position, I persuaded Arthur Henderson to accept the post.

Within a day or two, the names of the new Cabinet Ministers were announced. No one who had changed sides with MacDonald had suffered as a result of his sudden new convictions.

MacDonald was, of course, leader of the new Administration.

Up to that time he had given much to the building up of the Labour movement. But he always owed it more than he gave. The highest place, the greatest praise, and an authority which was almost absolute, had been surrendered to him.

When he deserted his side he talked of standing by the nation. Such a claim was idle. His whole life hitherto had been spent trying to prove that the majority of the nation believed in Socialist doctrines. He should have faced the 1931 crisis by the application of such doctrines, to which we could all have been faithful. But to do so might have cost him his position as Premier. It might; but of what importance is he to-day?

Before the autumn of 1931, I had never felt disturbed by what the Prime Minister might do in a crisis. It had never occurred to me that any living man at the head of a British Labour Government could step aside from his own people to lead the opposite forces. Mr. Baldwin was the chief of our opponents, but if one had read that he had done such a thing, one would have disbelieved the evidence of one's own eyes.

My first feeling of complete disquiet took root only 1931 when I saw the content shown by the Prime Minister when our resignations were offered. He did not conceal evidences of his satisfaction when he returned from the Palace to tell us that everything had been completely transformed—except himself. He remained the Leader, no matter that the army which he led was another army.

Mr. Snowden, though at the time he went with MacDonald, was more suspicious than some of us. He wrote:—

> "When the final disagreement occurred, it was evident that the Prime Minister had anticipated such a development, and had made his plans to deal with it."

Snowden even asked MacDonald for an assurance that the new Government would exist only to deal with the temporary emergency; that it would not be a Coalition, and that no Party legislation would be attempted. He received these assurances. How swiftly they were all broken was emphasised bitterly by Snowden when, as an honest man, he resigned to release himself from an intolerable position.

After our Prime Minister turned renegade, he submitted to many humiliations and apparently deserted every shred of the political faith his Party had accepted and he himself had formerly preached so ably.

There were a few who said that the Party would never survive MacDonald's departure from it. But it is he who has not survived the betrayal.

Later in 1931, after the Election victory, he said :—

" It may be the Conservatives will try to put something over on us. If so, I am not their man."

No, he was not their man—he had become their slave. He is no longer coherent, no longer understood. He is now the leader of a Party said by a political writer recently to " consist of two men and a boy."

In middle life, this strange man was vigorous and lucid enough. He did great things, and filled positions of high responsibility. Later, his courage seemed to decline, and he developed a deplorable obscureness. In Cabinets, he was less a leader than a medium for collecting opinions. He searched for safety, and rarely advised us towards policies which were dangerous because they were based on honest convictions.

1931 Mr. Churchill, one of MacDonald's new companions on the Government side, has said more damning things of him than any Labour man. He termed him : " The boneless wonder," and the phrase was not regarded in the House as being offensive but as a just description. When he added that no man could pack such a number of words into so small a space of thought, the allusion was received with approving mirth, and was admitted as true.

On September 8th, Parliament reassembled under the new Government. It was a very bitter moment for me and for many of us who had refused to run away from the service of the People. We had to look across the table and see opposed to us the faces of men who for a quarter of a century had been our sturdiest colleagues.

Our leader was directing the attack upon us. But he refused to meet our eyes.

Henderson, as Leader of the new Labour Opposition, made a speech outlining our position. He said that it amounted to this : That we were not prepared to support an economy campaign that cut unemployed pay for a man with a wife and two children from thirty shillings a week to twenty-four shillings a week. Our opponents wished to do this.

When he sat down, a vote of confidence in the new Government was carried by 309 votes to 250—a majority of only 59 votes.

The change of Government was not the means of performing a miraculous saving of the pound. Steadily and simultaneously, foreign countries continued to withdraw their money from us. They were entitled to demand this money from the Bank of England in gold bullion, and they did so.

It swiftly became evident that the Bank's reserve of £130,000,000 in gold, with which it covers our £350,000,000 in paper money, would soon be needed to meet foreign demands. We borrowed first £50,000,000 and then £80,000,000 from abroad, but still our gold drained away.

Meanwhile, our demands for money within the 1931 country became ever greater. In 1906, when I entered Parliament, our total national expenditure was 123 millions. In 1931, it was 804 millions—nearly seven times as much. Income tax was a shilling in the pound in 1906, and five times as much in 1931, with surtax running much higher. The War was the chief reason for the difference. Between 1914 and 1918, we scoured in money or goods 900 millions from America, and gigantic sums from the population of our own country. The day of reckoning for this insane spending on instruments of death came in 1931, and Labour, which had opposed a policy of war, had to try to pay for it.

Our Budget deficit on which the Tories twitted us was very large, but it was surpassed by similar deficits abroad. Germany faced a deficit of over 59 millions, France and Italy about 20 millions apiece, and the United States about 300 millions.

In a frantic endeavour to save the £, the new Government offered a solution that contained no exceptional quality of financial magic. They proposed to increase taxation, to effect economies, and to use the Sinking Fund money. We were prepared to do as much, with the exception that we refused to economise by cutting the pay of people whose standard of living was already below decency level.

Some such men were already existing on 18s. a week, and it was proposed to cut that ! I wonder how many of the M.P.s who voted for the reduction in unemployment pay could have lived on less than 18s. a week had their sincerities triumphed with the result that they found themselves no longer M.P.s but out of work also !

During the early debates in the House after the "National" Government took charge, the atmosphere was thunderous. All sorts of Parties were crammed on to the Treasury bench, and jeers and cheers came from unexpected sides to provide a muddling background to the speeches.

1931 Meanwhile, Bank experts and Treasury officials held hurried conferences, and despite the promises of cuts and economies, the position of the £ went from bad to worse. The Stock Exchange was in a condition of chaos resembling the days before the outbreak of war. Old firms were "posted," fortunes were lost, and gilt-edged stocks fell very heavily.

On Saturday, September 19th, £10,000,000 in gold was withdrawn from the Bank, and prospects of saving our credit became black indeed.

Chapter XVI

1931–1932—Suspension of the Gold Standard—World financial crisis averted—Unemployment rises—Wage cuts—Labour Party Conference outlines an Election policy—An astounding General Election—I lose my seat—Arthur Henderson's career—Politics from the onlooker's viewpoint—More secret Treaties ?—Back to Trade Union work—Some Union figures—Extending the Union services.

On Sunday, September 20th, the Directors of the Bank of England held a discussion with leading members of the Government. They pointed out that the Bank's gold reserve was vanishing, and that extraordinary measures must be taken at once to prevent an inflation such as occurred in Germany. Once the public had got the idea that the Bank had insufficient gold to cover paper notes, money would have ceased to have a fixed value, and £1,000 notes would have had to be printed with which to buy bread and meat.

The Bank was eventually told that legislation would 1931
be rushed through on the following day, to relieve it of the necessity to pay out gold for its notes, either on foreign demand or anyone else's.

On the Monday, an Act of Parliament was passed suspending the Gold Standard for six months, and the Bank Rate was raised to 6 per cent.

The atmosphere in the Commons was nervous and gloomy as the emergency measure was rushed through, almost without opposition. The thing was a gamble ; we had no certainty whether or not it would upset confidence within Britain and among her international trading connections, possibly with completely disastrous results. But a desperate situation called for a desperate remedy.

The Stock Exchange was closed on the Monday, to prevent panic from spreading there. The assent of King George V was obtained to the Gold Standard Suspension Bill before midnight.

Next day, when the Stock Exchange reopened, some wild selling went on, and War Loan dropped to unprecedented depths. Tape machines clicked remorselessly all day, and Treasury officials and banking experts felt a degree of terror toward midday, when it seemed that the Gold Standard measure had not averted a national calamity but hastened it. Certain people in London began to pack their belongings, ready for flight when financial chaos was succeeded as they feared by food shortage and riots.

But in the afternoon the tide turned. Industrial shares on the Stock Exchange began to rise in price as speculators started buying. By the evening, the crisis in money was past.

But the workless man with a wife and two children remained unaffected by this glad news from the City, for the twenty-four shillings a week to which his total pay had been cut was just as inadequate as before to stave off from those he cared for partial starvation and creeping disease.

1931 Like the outcast Labour Government, he had little hope that when the bankers who had made the crisis agreed to loosen the screw, they would also find more work for the unemployed.

Our National Government successors, despite their grandiose promises, did not check the flow of unemployment. Some time after they took our place, the total of out-of-works rose to the unprecedented figure of 3,000,000. The most hopeful message that could then be given out by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Chamberlain, was that: "We must all keep pegging away, and in a few years' time the figures may be reduced."

The poor felt it was a long time to be half-starved!

As a Deputy-Leader of the Labour Party under Mr. Henderson, I had much to do with the organisation, in the weeks following the new Government's assumption of office, of the Labour opposition in the House, and made a number of speeches outlining our position.

MacDonald sat silent in his place. I cannot believe 1931 that he had expected any other issue than that he would be discredited and despised by the vast majority of Labour voters, and that he, the deserter, would have to sit, supported by only one or two of his former colleagues, with hundreds of pairs of accusing eyes turned upon him which had formerly looked to him as an honoured leader. Yet he seemed bowed down by the atmosphere of dislike and hostility which he must have felt. His new Tory friends already appeared to look on him as one whose importance was past; they were perfectly polite but it was obvious that they had ceased already to count him as a live factor in Parliamentary affairs.

One of the first efforts of the new Government to meet the situation was the introduction of an emergency Budget during September, to meet a deficit of £70,000,000 in the Budget of the previous April, and a prospective deficit of nearly £200,000,000 in 1932. No country had ever previously been faced, in peace time, with so prodigious a task, and the man who chiefly undertook to tackle it was the former Labour Chancellor, Mr. Snowden.

Throughout the country, everyone suffered a cut in salary or a loss in income. The only gross inequality was that those who suffered most were those whose means were already below the limits of subsistence—the unemployed. In the intervening years, doctors, hospitals, prisons and public institutions have had to foot a gigantic bill in national ill-health caused directly by the "economies" instituted in 1931 on the workless section of our population.

The reductions in benefits were as follows :

	s.	d.
Man's unemployment pay reduced to	15	3
Woman's unemployment pay reduced to	13	6
Adult dependent	8	0
Child dependent	2	0
Young man	12	6
Young woman	10	9

To my mind, this table constitutes one of the blackest comments ever written across the pages of British history !

How did any one suppose it possible to feed, clothe and house a child on two shillings a week ? Any doctor would say that the least possible amount would be seven or eight shillings, and more if the infant were less than normally healthy.

How could a young woman live on 10s. 9d. a week ? It could not be done. One has only to examine the prostitution figures for the years following 1931 to see what happened to the future mothers of the nation.

1931 The excuse on which the "crisis" was artificially created, and the figure used to terrify everybody, was the 120 millions borrowed by Labour to sustain Unemployment pay at its former meagre rates. Yet, early in 1937, the National Government decided to borrow more than 400 millions to pay to the armaments firms, and according to a sheet understood to be the voice of MacDonald himself, there was "not a ripple on the financial surface."

The cuts in unemployment pay in 1931 meant in cold fact that thousands of mothers had to watch their babies die for lack of milk and medicines they could not afford. Older people had to wear clothes till they were hanging in tatters ; amusements consisted on leaning against doorposts in grimy streets or lying with minds a blank in public parks. Food for many was bread and margarine for breakfast, vegetables for dinner, and bread and margarine for tea.

I have seen people living like this in Lancashire ; there were thousands like it then in South Wales, and in the Clydeside and Tyneside slums. These were the people from whom, in order to save £26,000,000 a year, the National Government blithely proposed to take away a part of even those bare necessities that they had.

Other reductions were calculated to save substantial sums. Over ten million pounds was to be saved on education, but only half that amount on the Army, Navy and Air Force. The wages of M.P.s and public servants were cut by a total of nearly five millions. The non-State contributions to the Unemployment Fund were increased by ten millions. Almost as much again was taken from the Road Fund. The Ministry of Health grant was reduced by over a million.

Income tax was raised to five shillings in the pound, and allowances were cut, while surtax rose by 10 per cent. Duties on beer, tobacco, petrol and entertainments rose sharply. It was glibly claimed by the Government that these measures entailed an " equality of sacrifice " ranging from the King in his palace to the unemployed miner in his cottage.

Undoubtedly the whole country felt the weight of the economies, but there was no equality. I have written elsewhere in this book saying forcibly that I do not think that £5,000 a year is sufficient for a Minister who has to live in Downing Street ; but it would be ridiculous of me to say that the 10 per cent cut on such salaries in 1931 entailed the same degree of hardship on the deserter Prime Minister as it did on the man who tried to live on 15s. 3d. a week ! 1931

As usual, the poor people bore the burden.

Immediately the " National Government " had rushed through the Gold Standard Suspension Bill and the emergency Budget, and conditions were more steady, the Tories took advantage of the panic they had so sedulously fostered by deciding on a General Election. On October 7th Parliament was dissolved.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party annual conference was being held at Scarborough, and was notable for some progressive resolutions, which we decided to offer as our General Election programme.

We suggested nationalising the banking and credit system of the nation, to prevent a further recurrence of the crisis through which we were passing, and that Britain should try to bring about an international money conference to stabilise the values of world coinages. An essential part of our election promise was that, if we were returned to power, we should immediately restore all unemployment cuts.

Steps were taken to organise a vigorous Labour election campaign throughout the country. I went back to Manchester to take part in the fight there. But I soon found that I was faced with a widespread panic.

It has always been a maxim of the Conservative Party that if they can create a terror in the minds of the electors, they are sure of a majority. Spectres of various sorts have been raised again and again, but never one more gruesome than that of 1931. Speak as I would in Manchester, I could not lay the bogy. Facts were of no avail against fears.

1931 The election, not in my own division only but all over the country, was the most shameful and bitter one I have ever known. One of the most venomous weapons used against us was Mr. Runciman's statement, foolishly echoed by Snowden, that the Labour Party had considered raiding Post Office Savings Banks accounts in order to find money to meet the crisis. No such step had even been mooted, and there was not a word of truth in the story, but it lost us thousands of votes.

On the next occasion it may be suggested that Labour means to strike at the Throne, the Church, or Family Life. The political liar will always prove himself adequate to his occasions.

When it was all over, the results were found to create something of a record. Labour lost 213 seats, and suffered the defeat of every House of Commons member of the Cabinet except George Lansbury. More than 30 Ministers and 235 Labour M.P.s lost their seats, mine among the rest.

Not a single Tory seat was lost. 56 National candidates were returned unopposed ; more than the Labour total (52) in the new House. Government supporters finally numbered 556, against an Opposition of 59. It was grotesque !

After the election, the *Manchester Guardian*, a Liberal newspaper respected the world over for its impartial and accurate reports, declared that : " The shortest, strangest and most fraudulent Election campaign of our times is over ! "

My own metamorphasis was strange enough. After over a quarter of a century of unbroken service in the House of Commons, during which time I had held three major Ministerial posts, my role changed in a night from " His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State " to that of a mere onlooker at the political arena.

The Tories hilariously declared that the Labour Party was done for. Yet, in about a year, we were winning by-elections. Those Labour renegades who had run whimpering into the enemy's camp had still something to learn.

For my own part, though I was sorry to lose my seat, I 1931 was not greatly troubled about it. The Election was a catastrophe for us, but no greater than that which had put us in office on the threshold of a world crisis. I have seen many Labour setbacks in my time, and we have risen hardened in resolve and strengthened from them all. Progress can be delayed, but it cannot be stopped ; and I knew in 1931 that the work of the Parliamentary Labour Party had hardly yet begun.

The outstanding lesson of the crisis was, to my mind, that nationalisation of banks and big businesses is necessary to the nation's safety. The Labour Government was powerless to deal efficiently with the crisis simply because the control of national finance was not in our hands but in the hands of the bankers and financiers, who were thus able to dictate a policy and encompass the fall of a popularly elected Government.

1931 During the election campaign, our leader, Mr. Henderson, caught a cold which swiftly developed into a bad illness. The loss of his seat at Burnley under such circumstances, together with the overwhelming defeat of his Party, struck a blow at "Uncle Arthur" from which he never really recovered.

Henderson was not a great orator—few Labour men would claim to be. For our education has been largely of our own making, and our sincerities bubble up within and tend to make us express them in haste. But he had qualities of exposition, and an instinct for managing, organising and conducting elections, which gave him a singular place in the Party.

He was a deeply religious man, who applied his moral principles and ethical standards to political and Parliamentary duties. He was a likeable companion, whose interest was in men and affairs rather than in nebulous doctrines. He thoroughly enjoyed his share of jollity, but he had no craving for the social pleasures which attract most other men. His only luxury seemed to be work.

His character was intimate and revealing. He was the soul of honour, and never used language to conceal his thoughts, which certain politicians do.

In his long years of manual toil, he rose from the level of an apprentice in an iron foundry in Newcastle to the rank of foreman. When he decided to give up his foundry work for political service, he was twice offered a position as manager. He preferred employment in a humble Trade Union capacity, and eventually rose to be one of the finest Foreign Secretaries Britain has ever had.

Mr. Henderson was more than a Party Chief. He became a trusted and distinguished national figure, with international contacts of far-reaching value to mankind, and a personal friend of George V.

There was nothing flamboyant in his platform

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MR. CLYNES AND MR. HENDERSON AFTER THE 1931 CRISIS

appeals. He relied on facts and arguments, and appealed to his hearers' reason, not their emotions. There is not within the Labour Movement to-day any officer or leader who combines in such high degree Mr. Henderson's qualities and courage. His death was a great loss to us and to England, and his name will live when those of more showy politicians of this generation have been forgotten.

It is said that the onlooker sees most of the game. At least, those of us who had to look on impotently after the fall of the second Labour Government saw enough political shuffling and chicanery during the next few months to make us deeply resentful that our work for Britain should be so swiftly undone, and that such a deadly tangle should be created which no doubt we shall duly have to unravel in our next period of office.

After the so-called "National" Government took charge, crisis succeeded crisis, sensation followed sensation, and intrigues and emergencies became almost monthly affairs.

MacDonald, the shadow Prime Minister, was swiftly and easily edged out of the limelight into the political obscurity of Lord President of the Council, so that a Tory of the Tories could take his place as leader of the House.

The humbug of pretending to avoid party politics, 1931 which the Conservatives used when they covered their blunderings with the red-white-and-blue cloak of Nationalism, was soon openly abandoned. Hardly any members of the first "National" Cabinet are now left at their original posts.

Changes have been forced on all the principal Ministries. Three different Foreign Secretaries appeared in rapid succession, so as to get a True Blue of the Old School managing the country's foreign affairs.

The use of the word "National" as a title for the Government has since 1931 been worth hundreds of thousands of votes to the Tory Party. It was an adroit Party move because it made sincere people think they were voting for a nation, not a group.

Yet the Tory Party has appropriated nearly all the offices. In a Cabinet of twenty, only a few Ministers have not been official Conservatives, and a like proportion has been maintained in minor Government positions.

Men were not selected on any national ground, but within the limits of a Party claim. MacDonald was displaced by superior numbers alone, and the impression was given that his tenure of " National " office was in itself a favour.

Here is an explanation of " National Labour " from its own lips :

> " The true significance of MacDonald's career is that having first played the chief part in converting the nation to evolutionary Socialism, he is now dubbed a traitor by sound Party men because he has joined his converts to save the nation by putting it into practice."

Leaving out the allusion to " a traitor," this appears to mean that MacDonald joined the National Government to give effect to Socialism. Amery, Winterton, the Members for the City, powerful Directors, great Squires, and other " evolutionary Socialists " on the Government side are, then, making good the former faith of Ramsay MacDonald as he used freely to preach it ?

His apologists perhaps think they can find someone to believe this rubbish !

The remedy forced on Britain in order to cure the 1931 crisis has been an agonising one, especially to the unemployed and others whose means of subsistence were cruelly cut down to starvation levels. In time, however, the danger to world finance passed slowly away.

1931 International trade, reassured of private profit, began to increase. The bulldog tenacity of the British people, misdirected though it was by self-seekers and charlatans, gradually pulled Britain uphill towards prosperity again, even though the prosperity was reflected mainly in the bank-balances of those who grew rich by working men to death.

Employment, even, was eventually found for thousands, by dotting the country with new armament factories whose products may one day kill millions.

When we left office in 1931, Britain was respected and reasonably well liked in most of the European countries. By a policy of alternate bombast and frightened scuffling, the National Government has since succeeded in dragging us round the edge of a couple of wars, and now it is creeping nervously about on the edge of the Spanish inferno. 1931

So uncertain is the situation that we may yet be plunged, by their muddling, into a war with two or more of Europe's strongest nations.

The wicked old policy of secret agreements, which Labour replaced by open diplomacy, has been begun again. To whose continental military chariot are we tied to-day?

The public has a right to know. But it will never be told until—as in August, 1914—a Foreign Secretary announces gravely in the House of Commons that "our honour" requires us to fight once more to support some mouldering system of military terrorism, and that our cities must be gassed and our young men mutilated because of some understanding to which the country at large has never given its approval, and about which it has perhaps never even heard.

We were told in 1914 that we went to war because of "A Scrap of Paper." In 1919, Britain's signature was placed on a Treaty bearing our solemn pledge that we would disarm. Except during the tenure of Labour Governments, we have been feverishly arming ever since.

We have dishonoured that "Scrap of Paper." It was "expedient" to do so. Such treaties, in fact, are never honoured when they would lead to peace, but only when they pledge us to organised national murder and pillage.

The British support to the League of Nations, which the Labour Governments worked so hard to strengthen, has been greatly diminished. The bolder Tories say, with tongue in cheek, that the League costs us too much to deserve our backing. I should have thought that even children could see how cheap Peace is compared with War, or with the present armaments race which is spuriously suggested as a panacea against war.

In a recent year, the League budget total amounted to just over one million pounds, of which the British share was £107,000. In the same year, our Secret Service costs alone amounted to £180,000, and our Services vote to some hundreds of millions !

1931 For a period following my first election defeat, I had to watch the political arena from outside the House of Commons. The break enabled me to devote more time to my Union activities, which I had long desired to do.

I was a Trade Union official long before I was an M.P., but my two jobs have been bound together since 1906. Most Trade Unions started taking part in politics because they could no longer keep separate from them. All questions of far-reaching interest touching closely the workers' welfare became in time the subject of Parliamentary discussion and action.

The Union, of which I have been President for many years, led the way into the political field. We have always given the fullest financial support to the National Labour Party, in addition to supporting our own candidates, and the political cost has been kept down to about one farthing per week per member.

Hundreds of our members now serve on County Councils, Boards of Guardians and Municipal Corporations throughout the country. We have returned over a dozen Members of Parliament, about a dozen Mayors and Lord Mayors, and numerous J.P.'s and Aldermen.

Each year, the Union deals successfully with over 1,600 claims for compensation, and secures settlements amounting to about £115,000. This means that in an average week, we obtain over £2,000 in compensation for our members.

We spend £5,000 a year on legal assistance to members, and a further £6,000 on Industrial Councils and similar bodies which regulate the wages of thousands of our

Union men. We pay about 5,000 claims annually for funeral benefit—100 a week!—at a cost of £40,000, a third of it being in respect of members' wives.

Our funds now amount to about £800,000, and of each pound, 18s. is immediately available, 1s. 6d. is invested in property, and 6d. in other sound investments.

Our membership is slowly approaching the half-million mark, and is steadily growing.

Helping to control an organisation as vast as this, it will be realised that the years following my Parliamentary defeat in 1931 were busy ones for me. I did what I could to extend and solidify the Union, and to increase its trade and political strength and value. As a founder of British Trade Union activities, I have always fully realised the working man's need for unity; and when I am no longer President of my Union, I want to leave behind me an organisation that will play an important part in improving conditions for my own class.

The privations and miseries that I and my contemporaries suffered in our early working days shall never return again in Britain. The Unions we have so slowly and painfully built up will see to that.

I returned to my Union activities in 1931 with the greater zest because of my new freedom from Parliamentary duties. That freedom was a complete compensation for any defeat, and took away all sense of regret at my first Parliamentary reverse.

I began for a year or two a life of greater ease, with 1931
liberty to do what I liked instead of the exactions, engagements and commands incidental to a high officer of State.

Indeed, the only sense of loss which I can now recall was in finding that, after being a Member of the House of Commons for over a quarter of a century, I could no longer walk into the dining-room for lunch without securing some Member to take me in as a visitor. I could, as a Privy Councillor, freely enter the House of Lords and sit near the steps of the Throne, but not go into the House of Commons and pay for my own dinner!

Chapter XVII

1932–1935—Britain's foreign outlook—The Balance of Power fallacy—Foch on war—Chamberlain on the German peril—Impotence of the Prime Minister—Mussolini and Hitler—The Abyssinian war—Hell's angels over Africa—British naval and military concentrations—Sanctions fail—The Hoare-Laval sensation—Setbacks to financial recovery—King George V's Jubilee—At a Jubilee banquet at the Palace—Another General Election—In again for Platting—Offered the Leadership of the Labour Party.

1932 As soon as the National Government had settled into power, and the immediate peril of a world financial crisis had been averted, there began a secret and dangerous re-shuffling of European power. It is still going on, and we shall be fortunate if it does not result in another European war in our time.

The foreign policy of Labour has always been to remain friendly with other nations equally, not favouring one above another. In contrast, the Conservatives were unconvinced even by the War that their previous policy of a Balance of Power is fatal to world peace. Consequently, they have always pursued this theory, by befriending certain nations so openly that others have grown offended and have sought anti-British alliances.

Japan and Italy are two examples of nations which fought courageously on our side in the War, and which have since been antagonised almost to the point of conflict. Common prudence would have suggested that we kept at least a semblance of amity with such powerful countries, much as most Britishers deplore their militaristic outlook and ruthless methods. But the Tories seldom allow sagacity to interfere with policy!

In the past dozen years we have taken the side of

France in nearly every argument. It is necessary for France and England to be in accord ; but we must realise that our Gallic neighbour has a very different outlook from ourselves. 1932

In the lifetime of many living Frenchmen and most of their statesmen and generals, France has been twice invaded by Germany. Last time, a third of her territory was ravaged and a great part of her young manhood slain.

She lives in daily terror lest history again repeats itself. She taxes her people and strains her resources of man-power to build up a defensive line along the frontier, well knowing, as any military student can see at a glance, that it cannot be made impenetrable. A modern military mobile column could sweep through it in a few hours.

France has claimed for many years that her natural frontier is the Rhine. That claim has always been the fuse to the European powder-magazine. This or that nation keeps attempting to lengthen the fuse, but time burns it away.

At this moment it is smouldering faster than it has done since 1918. The British policy of sectional alliances has caused Germany to look round her for similar allies. We treated Italy shamefully at the Versailles Conference, refusing her Colonial expansions with which bribe she had been persuaded to abandon her German alliance and enter the War on our side. Therefore it was to Italy that Germany first looked for assistance. Now the two countries are firmly wedged together by a common political creed.

In the Spanish War they have acted as one. If they can do so, they may ensure the victory of the Insurgent forces in Spain, thus surrounding France by a Fascist Germany, a Fascist Italy and a Fascist Spain.

France is not blind to this encirclement. On her part, she has made treaties of alliance with Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and Russia. What Britain has promised France has never been divulged to the people of this country, but the military experts of both nations have foregathered, obviously to discuss joint schemes of defence. In modern war theory, defence is ridiculous without naval, military and air offence, and it is obvious that the Staff Talks included these possibilities.

Ever since 1931 the Government policy has been to divide Europe into these two ever more definable groups. Britain, France, Russia, and a number of smaller nations stand on one side ; Germany, Italy, Japan and Austria are on the other. At each succeeding "situation" in Europe, the groups take a stealthy step closer, not with friendly motives. 1932

If this policy is persisted in, the end will be the same as the end in 1914, when the Balance of Power theory was exploded for ever to all intelligent people. But the conduct of the war will not be the same. Marshal Foch, a great military genius in this century, said some years ago :

> "The military mind always expects the next war to be like the last, and prepares for the one that is ended. That is always wrong.
>
> "The next war will be incomparably worse than anything we have been able to conceive. It is our task, therefore, to limit the ships of war, the armies, the tanks, the guns, the aircraft, the poison gas, which will destroy our children and our children's children if we allow another war to break out."

Austen Chamberlain, himself a distinguished Foreign Secretary, frequently warned his Party against the policy which his brother's Government is now recklessly pursuing. He said when writing of the Treaty of Locarno :—

> "After the War, peace rested, not on goodwill or assent, but solely on the incapacity of the vanquished to renew the struggle. Some day the wheel of fortune will turn. It will be possible for Germany to find an ally, and on that day, embittered by suffering, provoked by constant interference, seeing no other hope, however

> desperate the throw, she will stake all on a new gamble, and Europe will be faced with another and yet more appalling Armageddon."

Germany has now found that ally in Italy, one of the most powerfully armed and arrogant nations in the western world.

In the whole history of the events following MacDonald's flight into the enemy camp there is no more striking instance of his fall to insignificance than that provided by the foreign policy of the National Government. While he was with us, his foreign policy was the Labour one of mutual friendship with all other nations. Himself head of the Foreign Office in 1924, he took steps to secure a degree of German amity which has never since been equalled. In 1929–31, as Prime Minister, he directed a similar line of conduct towards both Germany and Italy.

Yet, the moment he became head of the National Government, he sat by, impotent and smiling, while 1932 Britain's policy shoved and cajoled Europe into two opposing armed camps. He never opened his mouth to protest ; Mr. Churchill's " boneless wonder " was leader of the Government still, but he sat quietly in a trance while his Foreign Secretary wandered whither he would. Subsequently, as Lord President of the Council, MacDonald, despite his reputation as an authority on foreign policy, apparently remained in unbroken contemplation—the Grand Lama of Westminster.

It has been said that Providence always supplies the man to meet the situation. That has, unfortunately, not yet been the case in Britain since the new Government policy of sectional alliances has been imperilling our peace.

But in Germany and Italy men have arisen whose influence on the growing war danger has been incalculably great. Mussolini has taken charge of the soul and strength of Italy. He has successfully humbled the Greeks by a mere demonstration of his power ; in the

Abyssinian war, he stood alone defying the world, and conquered a new colony for his country. He sedulously fosters the dream of a restoration of the Roman Empire round the Mediterranean ; yet no further steps can be taken to make that dream a reality without a major war with Britain.

In Germany, behind the heroic wooden statue of Hindenburg, a little black figure with a drooping moustache has swiftly grown gigantic. Adolf Hitler, son of an Austrian sign-painter, now holds a more supreme power in Germany than the Kaiser held in 1914.

As a Labour man, I have no sympathy with Fascism or its exponents—in Britain. But I do not think we should force our opinions down the throats of foreign countries. We should consider the claims of those countries, and try to understand their grievances, rather than reply to their bluster by joining in an armaments race that may end in bloodshed.

Italy's penetration into Abyssinia was the outstanding political event of 1935 and 1936. For about a year there was constant grave danger that this might spread into a world war.

During 1935, Mussolini announced in effect that he proposed to flout his country's solemn declarations to the League of Nations by annexing Abyssinia as an Italian colony. The book written since by one of his Marshals shows with cynical abandon how the Duce and his General Staff were plotting this invasion while at the same time they were redoubling their bland assurances to the League to submit all quarrels there for peaceful settlement.

1933 Finally, selecting a transparent excuse, Italian troops were poured into Africa by their Dictator. Other lands had been invaded and their peoples massacred by sword and cannon, but the League of Nations was built up to prevent such a thing happening again. Faced with Italy's challenge, the League was weakened by desertions and timidity.

Britain, like the rest, tacitly agreed to tear up yet another " Scrap of Paper." While Italy marched in might against the black tribesmen of the Ethiopian hills, our Government representatives wrangled at Geneva and did very little. Before the Blackshirt legions in Africa, the sky was darkened with bombing aircraft, and the air filled with billowing green clouds of poison-gas, which blistered the skins and burst the gasping lungs of the half-clad black fighters.

Nervous tension swept through the Chancelleries of the world. Half the members of the League showed clearly by their words that, while they were willing to make any amount of grandiose promises, what they really wanted was self-glorification and trade agreements. They were in the League for what they could get out of it.

Britain made some sort of effort to save her face. She sent warships steaming into the Mediterranean. One of them, given orders to get to Alexandria in time to prevent a certain Italian effort there, went through the Suez Canal at a speed which pulled down the sandy banks behind her, and gave engineers work to do for over twelve months subsequently. But she arrived in time.

Our cruisers went pounding across the Seven Seas 1933
from Britain, South America, China and New Zealand. But as our Foreign Office hastened humbly to reassure Mussolini that this great gathering of fighting vessels near Italy was a normal exercise that had nothing whatever to do with his actions in Abyssinia, he naturally paid scant attention to them.

None the less, he took one step which might have ended in world disaster. It is said that part of his powerful Air Force was trained as a death-or-glory section, whose task was to fly fast aircraft loaded with explosives straight at British warships, in the event of an outbreak.

British Admiralty experts have since suggested that such an attack would incommode a British Fleet no more than the struggles of the mayfly do the hungry trout; but modern happenings in Spanish waters have somewhat shaken this theory.

A British army was moved, with full equipment of war, to the Eygptian-Abyssinian border, and many tales are rife of how, on a certain day, British soldiers crouched in a seven-mile-deep network of trenches, watching the border over the sights of loaded rifles, and with artillery drawn up almost wheel to wheel behind them, waiting for a Very light to flare through the skies as the signal for an attack to commence on the masses of Italian troops waiting within sight on the other side of the frontier.

Italian bombers certainly flew over Egypt on that day, but in the end the tension was eased.

1935 While we were indulging in these demonstrations, the Italians were sweeping across Abyssinia. Town after town fell to them, not through ordinary operations in the field, but because the defenders were unable after two or three days and nights of unceasing bombing to remain among the smashed brickwork that had once been quiet streets.

It was more than flesh and blood could stand.

At times, three hundred machines were employed simultaneously, and continued to rain down high explosive and machine-gun fire for ten and twelve hours together. The conquerors then marched in, trampling through a dreadful mass of bloody mud, brick-dust and flame.

Yet the aircraft used were only second-line machines, for the cream of the Air Force and the Army were kept in Italy ready for action in Europe if need should arise.

When high explosive was not enough to break the morale of the negro spearmen, mustard-gas was freely employed, and revolting photographs reached Europe showing black men covered with poisoned blisters caused by this gas. Thousands of others developed consumption through damage caused to their lungs.

Baldwin and his Cabinet met with feverish frequency, but nothing effective was done to prevent this outrage against humanity. We were content to guard our rights in Egypt by a display of bared teeth on the frontier ; what happened beyond it was, of course, deplorable, but (so the Government indicated) it was hardly our affair.

Eventually, after a great parade of anger, and a 1933 lengthy warning which gave Italy time to make preparations, a few sanctions were applied against her by Britain and other League States. Steps were taken to prevent the sale of a few trivial luxuries to Italy, but nothing effective was done to prevent her from obtaining machine-guns, canisters of poison-gas, or petrol for her aircraft.

The world learned that wars of aggression still pays. The greatest experiment for peace ever attempted was emasculated mainly by Britain's timidity, and by the fact that a " Scrap of Paper " did not mean the same thing in 1935 as in 1914.

Had the fifty States of the League applied sanctions properly, Italy must perforce have brought the Abyssinian dispute to the Court of the League for settlement, and it would then have been a long time before any other country was so foolish as to try to start another war.

Before the miserable Abyssinian affair was ended, the Government made a scapegoat for its own scuffling by accepting the resignation of one of its series of Foreign Secretaries, Sir Samuel Hoare, whose reign at the Foreign Office lasted barely six months.

Sir Samuel went to Paris and held certain conversations with M. Laval. What transpired is not very clearly known even now, but the British Foreign Secretary was received by a shocked Government on his return to London, and a successor was immediately appointed in his place. He broke down during his explanation before the Commons ; but a victim had been needed and one had been found.

Whether the indignation would have been so great against him had the talks in Paris passed unnoticed by the Press and the public, no one will ever know. A more unsatisfactory ending to a major political sensation has seldom been witnessed in this country, and future years may supply a curious explanation of the event.

After a few months of modern warfare, Mussolini had reduced the country that military experts said would take four years to conquer. Very soon the Emperor of Abyssinia, who had been received in England as the honoured guest of the King during the lifetime of the first Labour Government, and later in Italy, and who had trusted to the League to protect his little country from extermination, had to flee in a British warship, and since then he has been a monarch without a kingdom.

On May 10th the King of Italy was proclaimed Emperor of Abyssinia. It is said of him that, when the African campaign began, he whispered to a friend: "If this war is successful I shall be Emperor of Abyssinia, and if it fails I shall once more be King of Italy." It succeeded, but Mussolini is the real ruler of all three.

The triumph of the Italian armies in Africa must in the pages of history in the future be read with feelings of unqualified shame by every European. It is incredible that civilised men could rejoice so in such a success.

Yet Marshal de Bono has written a volume describing in lurid terms how the black men's Empire was smashed. He laments that some of his victories in Abyssinia were not so spectacular as they might have been because of the unpleasant habit of the enemy in refusing pitched battles.

1933 Mobs of unarmed and untrained black goatherds would not face whippet tanks, modern army gunnery, air fleets, flame-throwers and poison gas!

This book of de Bono reads as though he and Mussolini personally rushed hand in hand across the Ethiopian plains calling for the rightful owners of the land to come out into the open like men and be shot for the glory of Italy!

Since that war ended, there have been serious revolts among the natives, and the General who was sent to supercede the martial de Bono went near to death at the hand of an assassin. To quell such outbreaks, Italian troops were told to massacre and pillage in a number of Abyssinian towns, and to burn thousands of native huts to the ground.

We have not heard much since this savage reprisal, either of revolt or colonisation ; but it is the wrong way to go to work.

The Italian nation, inflamed with this success in its defiance of the League and of the world, is now looking with eager eyes towards further opportunities of Colonial expansion. Germany, in sore need of Colonial space, cannot fail to have reflected on Italy's way with the same problem. Later these two countries were found interfering in Spain, apparently as successfully as ever. They will not make Spain the extreme limit of their ambitions.

The Abyssinian War, with its consequent sanctions and international unrest, harmed this country by disturbing our trade. In the preceding years, unscrupulous financiers, attempting to fill their pockets by financial juggling at times when whole nations were already on the verge of starvation, over-reached themselves and brought down thousands in their fall.

James White and Lowenstein both committed suicide, but left innumerable little investors ruined and terrified. Clarence Hatry, himself a German Jew, profited from Germany's ruin, and by that and various other enterprises became controller of over 30 million pounds. But he took to forgery to increase his wealth, and went to gaol. Ivan Kruger also attempted forgery to cover his wild transactions, and his collapse made the finance of four great nations shake.

But despite these blows, Britain—and after her the world—began to rise from the financial Slough of Despond, and by 1935 things were looking hopeful again. Unemployment was slowly decreasing ; Germany 1935
and Austria had got their coinage back to sanity ; and the United States was very slowly recovering from

the worst slump she had ever known. In Lancashire, some cotton-mills were reopened, and on the Clyde the *Queen Mary* was gone at last from the stocks where she had hung for so long like a gigantic skeleton on a gibbet.

Because of this industrial revival, 1935 was a year of renewed hope in Britain. Despite the blackness of the foreign situation, and the fact that we were more than once on the very verge of war with Italy, the country was more cheerful and prosperous than it had been for some time.

It was appropriate that, at such a time, King George V's Jubilee should be celebrated by great and widespread rejoicings throughout the Empire.

I have given various accounts elsewhere in this book of my many contacts with the late King. I recall very clearly my last dinner with him.

1935 At the height of the Jubilee festivities Mrs. Clynes and I were invited to a celebration banquet at Buckingham Palace. Many visiting Princes and personages of high station were numbered among the glittering company on that gala night. What I remember most was first the wonderment and then the delight of some of the foreign guests, on seeing the King's Pipers march into and round the great banqueting-hall. No spectacle is quite like that march, and for such a purpose it justifies the late King's act in personally recruiting those twenty-four pipers many years ago.

On that night, the King, though showing signs of tiredness from the exhausting labours of his Jubilee work, was as active and looked as happy and keen as at any time during the height of his powers.

Accustomed as he was to a life of cheering receptions and popular homage, he was evidently delighted and deeply touched at the unmistakable proofs of loyalty and friendship shown by every class of the population during the remarkable week.

Towards the end of 1935, when a General Election became imminent, the Tories made one of the most remarkable changes of front in the history even of that versatile Party. Hitherto, no abuse and derision had been too much for them to hurl at the League of Nations. A hundred examples could be quoted from their principal speakers between 1931 and 1935, showing in what contempt they held the League, and what a perilous muddler they thought it.

But, as election time approached, there took place a striking political harlequinade. To parody a famous phrase, when Mr. Baldwin said turn, they all turned.

England awoke one morning to find Tories weeping crocodile tears of repentance over their former unbeliefs. No praise was too high, no obeisance too low, for the thing they had formerly condemned. Once, they had taken as a slogan: "Hats off to France!" Now the words were changed, and: "Hats off to the League" set them dancing a new measure. 1935

As this most opportunely happened to coincide with a general feeling throughout the country that the League really *was* Britain's one hope of future peace, Labour, which had always supported the League since its inception and had sent principals instead of secretaries to League meetings, was forgotten in the Election, and a National Government was once more returned to Westminster.

Yet there were signs and portents, even in that strange General Election. The Government majority in the House fell from 497 to 248. The Labour vote was heavily increased, and 160 Labour men were returned.

Despite the catch-cry that Labour wanted a Sanctions War with Italy, and despite the beautiful sight of Die-hard Generals stiffly genuflecting before the goddess of Peace, it seemed that Nationalism was distinctly suspect.

I contested the Platting division once more, and conducted a vigorous campaign. Manchester people, I found, were thoroughly dissatisfied with the National Government, and wanted to go back to someone of whose work they had had longer experience. I won my seat with a comfortable majority, and the scenes of excitement that followed the announcement rivalled those of nearly thirty years earlier, when I first won the seat for Labour.

1935 When Parliament reassembled, I was asked once again to accept nomination as Leader of the Opposition, but I refused to do so. Others have done much in recent years to entitle them to lead the Party, and there are many important things that I must do which would have to be abandoned if I took the Leadership a second time.

But Labour does not lack sincere leaders. Our men in the Commons are three inches shorter, on an average, than the Tories. No doubt the reason is that poor people had to face cruel conditions of life when we were young; but it may well be now a case of brains on one side of the House and brawn on the other!

Chapter XVIII

1935–1936—In Parliament again—Death of George V—Memories of the late King—Britain rearms—German troops enter the Rhineland—Hitler's peace effort frustrated—Lord Allenby on war—J. H. Thomas and the Budget sensation—Mrs. Simpson—A Parliamentary crisis—Baldwin tells the House of the Abdication—Memories of Edward VIII—Labour and the Throne—The question of a Republic—No President of England for us !

The 1935 General Election was a triumph for Labour, since our representation in the House of Commons after it was more than three times as big as it had been previously. But we were still too few to inflict a defeat ; and a weak Opposition always means an unprogressive Government.

We did what we could, and we expressed our views forcibly on matters affecting public welfare, but in any important issue we were easily overwhelmed by numbers. 1935

The new Parliament had done little except congratulate itself on avoiding defeat at the polls, when political disagreements had suddenly to be laid aside before a great national grief.

On January 20th, 1936, millions of listeners heard an evening broadcast programme of entertainment suddenly stop, and be succeeded by the slow and solemn ticking of a clock. After an intolerable period of suspense, a grave voice announced : "The King's life is drawing peacefully towards its close."

Thousands of people had not previously realised that His Majesty's indisposition was serious ; but that night King George V died.

The first British monarch to reign through a Labour Government, His late Majesty saw changes take place that were greater, perhaps, than those witnessed by any former king. The War ; flying ; broadcasting ; women's suffrage ; the collapse of every great monarchy except his own ; a world financial crisis which threatened to engulf civilisation ; these and other epoch-making events changed the face of his world.

Two things—both of them exceedingly hard things for anyone bred in the peculiar atmosphere of a Palace to give—were required of him in his lifetime. The first was sympathy with new political ideas, and readiness to accept change and to adapt himself to conditions which would have angered his grandparents or parents. The second was the power to give a rallying-point of stability to a people bewildered by the rapidity of progress.

These things were found in George V in full measure. They are not common in monarchs. The history of the past thirty years affords many instances of rulers whose thrones have been overturned because they set themselves stubbornly to defend the "divine rights" claimed by royalties in a previous century.

King George remained at Buckingham Palace because he was a democrat. He was the finest example in modern times of the supremely difficult art of constitutional kingship. He took the trouble to understand his people, and to progress with them through the age in which they lived.

George V saw the power of the House of Lords severely limited. Other monarchs have resisted such a step, but he accepted it as a just and necessary consequence of modern conditions. He approved the extension of the franchise beyond property-owners to citizens, and later to women. In the same spirit he accepted the election to office of a new party most of whose members were manual workers, and I shall always remember his courtesy, sympathy and helpfulness to us when, with an inevitable degree of uneasiness, we first presented ourselves at the Palace as his State advisers.

1936 Memorable scenes followed his death. I was impressed by the silence of the vast crowds which lined the London streets ; over two million people stood in those crowds—

a multitude never exceeded in London's history, even at the recent Coronation.

King George V died towards the end of January. In the beginning of February, as their first important piece of legislation, the so-called National Government, which had been returned to power immediately before because of its firm pledges to the peace policy of the League of Nations, suddenly announced so vast a programme of armaments that the world stood aghast.

How the late King, who loved peace, would have felt towards such an announcement, or whether it could have been made at all in his reign, no one can say. I recall many talks with him, and his desire for world sanity was obvious in them. At times in his life he intervened personally in the cause of peace. Once, at least, his decision and courage in handling an Irish problem that had been almost abandoned as hopeless by his Ministers averted a grave peril of war. There were other occasions in foreign politics where his wisdom and experience guided the Foreign Office in critical situations.

1936 In Germany, the British armament scheme created dismay and anger. In the Treaty of Versailles, we had specified *that Germany should disarm so as to open the way to universal disarmament*. Under the two Labour Governments, disarmament in Britain was actually begun. Under no other Government since 1918 was any effort whatever made to carry out our solemn pledge.

The Anglo-French military staff talks perturbed the Germans further. They argued rightly that these talks violated the Locarno Treaty, and saw in them an alliance menace against Germany. The Franco-Soviet Pact added still more to their alarm. By the terms of this pact, France agreed to attack Germany if Germany came into armed conflict with Russia, even though this violated France's pledges to the League of Nations. Moreover, it was obvious, after the staff talks, that Britain would probably take action with France in such an event.

On Saturday, March 7th, Germany made a startling reply to these gestures against her. Without any political warning, steel-helmeted hordes, supported by tanks, artillery and aircraft, poured into the demilitarised Rhineland zone, and various Ambassadors in Berlin, including our own, were handed a Note formally denouncing the Locarno Treaty terms on the ground that they had already been broken by England and France.

This Note put various countries in difficulties. Germany offered through her Foreign Minister, von Neurath, to establish with France and Belgium mutual demilitarised zones, to conclude a twenty-five years non-aggression pact with all the leading European countries, to arrange an air-pact, and to return to the League of Nations.

This was described at the time as " the most momentous political move in Europe since the War." Intense Cabinet activity took place in London. Ambassadors developed indispositions which kept them within doors and prevented them from answering questions without official instructions.

1936 France immediately set up a clamour to have Germany " punished." Britain, after a perilous delay, tried unsuccessfully to stand in a graceful attitude with one foot in Paris and the other in Berlin. But the strain proved too great to be borne ; and what might have been the biggest step towards world peace since 1914 was halted.

At one period in the negotiations, Germany prepared to send delegates to London ; but on the eve of departure they were stopped by an arrogant refusal from France to deal with them until all German troops had been withdrawn from the Rhineland. Any child should have realised that this condition was impossible. The German troops, in possession again of their coveted territories and among their reclaimed people, would have mutinied rather than obey such an order.

Eventually, Hitler said his representatives should come to London on one condition—that his peace offer should be immediately considered. Even this condition was finally waived. But the Conference which took place was ineffective and filled with suspicion. In the end, France's comments were indiscreetly published, and put a final stoppage to all hopes of reconciliation.

Frustrated in what seems to have been a sincere effort towards a peaceful European agreement, Germany immediately began a rearmament programme to compete with ours. Hitler announced that the size of his army would be doubled. German arms factories began to work night and day. Fighting aircraft were turned out by the hundred. Hundreds of millions of pounds were squeezed out of the German taxpayer, driving him to the verge of starvation, so as to build up a Teuton fighting machine that will eventually be much more deadly than that which entered the field of Mars in 1914.

Further conversations took place between British, French and Belgian military authorities. This act of ostentatious menace was received in Germany like a blow in the face.

It is a matter for observation that if one picks out the kindly, stupid, obstinate-looking man at any distinguished gathering, they are nearly always professional soldiers. These men make excellent officers, no doubt ; but they should never be allowed to interfere at moments of political crisis. The hand that wields the sword is too heavy for the delicate machinery of statesmanship.

To answer Germany's rearmament campaign, our own plans were rushed forward. Taxation was raised to pay for still greater instruments of death, while the claims of the workless, the uneducated and the hungry were once more shoved aside. 1936

Armies will grow like the warriors of the dragon's teeth, till they turn and destroy each other. The precocious seedlings of the rich and titled will be sure of highly paid and pensioned employment as military and naval officers, while workmen watch in agony as the tools of their trade rust out in continued unemployment. Presently war may come, and the price will have to be paid in the lives of the conscripted workmen of the rank-and-file. But there will be profit in it all for someone.

Before 1914, I gave many warnings of the European War. Now, I say clearly that another and infinitely worse war is likely within the next half-dozen years, unless the present insane armaments race is stopped, and new plans laid for peace.

At the time the rearmament programme was announced, Lord Allenby, one of the most famous soldiers of recent years, said :

> " Ordeal by battle brings lasting benefit to neither combatant. What have availed the victories of Napoleon, Moltke or Bismarck ?
>
> " At the present moment, years after the close of the war which was to bring peace to all, we find the cleverest brains everywhere experimenting with more horrible engines of destruction, brewing more atrocious poisons, designing more monstrous methods of murder. If war comes, our women and children will be as open to attack as any soldier in the field."

The people to whom he spoke could think of nothing better to do than throw bags of flour and eggs, and let loose hens ; and the country which had hailed him as a saviour a few years before agreed to be taxed yet more heavily to buy the very engines and the actual poisons he mentioned.

Whom the Gods wish to destroy they first make mad !

In April, 1936, another major political sensation occurred.

1936 Before the Budget was read in the Commons, much wild gambling was indulged in on the Stock Exchange concerning the possibility of an increase in Income Tax, and the chance of a rise in the duty on tea. Lloyds and other big insurance concerns stood to lose very considerable sums of money as a result.

But a statement was made that convulsed the City. It was said that information had leaked out concerning the Budget details prior to the Chancellor of the Exchequer placing it before the House of Commons, and that some of the insurance gambling was dictated by positive knowledge of the coming changes.

The little whisper in Throgmorton Street spread and went rumbling like a thunderclap through Britain and the world. The name of a former colleague, J. H. Thomas, was connected with the rumours. Eventually, a Tribunal was set up by the Commons to inquire into the details of the alleged Budget leakage.

It was soon evident that some of the insurance gambling had not been gambling at all, but had been "backing a certainty." As a result of the findings of the Tribunal, Thomas resigned his position in the Cabinet and his seat in Parliament.

He shed tears in his final speech, and his departure 1936 from the House of Commons where he had been for many years an interesting figure, was a melancholy spectacle. There was universal regret at its cause.

Thomas's achievements had been mainly in the sphere of Trade Union service, and there he enjoyed an unquestioned record up to 1931, when his Union disapproved of his sudden retreat into the enemy camp by taking against him the strongest action in its power. Before that time, his achievements were of fine value to thousands of railway workers, to whom he gave a rugged and skilful leadership hitherto unknown to them.

Such constructive abilities as he had were not revealed in any schemes applicable to the problem of unemployment, which was placed in his charge. Among these bigger figures he seemed somewhat at a loss.

He had the habit of forming social contacts which was rare among us, and an affability enabling him to treat prince or peer as though he were a member of his own executive. He could slap dignitaries on the back without giving offence, but this quality was not sufficient.

His principles were evidently not deeply rooted in the soil of what most of us understood as Socialism, for when we were unwilling to accept the plan of a "National" Government, he found no trouble in keeping on the winning side. At a time when sticking to his own people would have meant an uncertain future, he went along with MacDonald and remained a Cabinet Minister.

He began work as an errand-boy at the age of nine, later became an engine-driver, and rose to be a Privy Councillor, and twice Colonial Secretary.

Towards the end of 1936, a Parliamentary situation arose unprecedented in our history.

1936 King Edward VIII, who had come to the Throne with pomp and ceremony less than a year before, suggested to the Prime Minister that he wished to marry an American lady, Mrs. Simpson. Had the choice been that of an unattached American girl, affairs might have ended more happily.

Diplomats in European countries began to stir uneasily at the thought of what might happen.

Our Dominions became very disturbed. They are part of the Empire over which the King reigns, and they made it abundantly clear that they wished to express their views as to the future of the monarchy.

The development of the situation in England was extraordinary. For many months before, Dominion and American magazines had been commenting freely on the King's friendship. Photographs appeared showing Mrs. Simpson and Edward VIII on holiday and in London together. When these papers reached England, all such references were cut out; and our own Press preserved a discreet silence.

At last, a Bishop made a public reference which brought the whole affair into the glaring light of publicity.

The King suggested a morganatic marriage, but the Prime Minister informed him that this did not meet with general approval. Urgent Cabinets were held. One by one, the Colonial and Dominion Governments stepped relentlessly into line to oppose the marriage.

The King reigns, but Parliament rules. After hectic debates, and amid tremendous excitement, the knowledge at last went forth that His Majesty was faced with two alternatives—renunciation of his friend or abdication from the Throne.

All eyes were turned towards Westminster, where the Commons grappled with the gravest constitutional crisis known since Charles I was beheaded for defying Parliament. Mr. Churchill took upon himself the ancient office of King's Champion, and though he did not ride into Westminster Hall clad in mail and fling down an iron gauntlet on behalf of his sovereign, he would obviously have liked to do so.

His request for an assurance that no irrevocable step should be taken before a formal statement had been placed before Parliament evoked some mixed cheering. There arose a peril that our political divisions would be split, and that a King's Party might emerge.

To his everlasting credit, King Edward rejected all idea of defying Parliament, or appealing personally to the sentiment of his people. Difficult as the situation was, he faced it like a true son of that fine gentleman, his father.

A friend visited him just before the end. " It's pretty hard, isn't it ? " said the King quietly.

Whenever Mr. Baldwin rose to speak to the House, 1936
he had to stand there passive and expressionless while thunderous cheers re-echoed from every side. He refused to answer questions, leaving the issue as far as possible to the King himself. Crowds waited patiently outside No. 10, and near the guarded gates of Fort Belvedere, where His Majesty stayed.

The lady left England for Cannes, and it was thought that the King had resolved to give her up and remain on the Throne. In the Commons that day the tension was a little eased.

Then came the dramatic rumour that the King had abdicated. Mr. Churchill hurried to Fort Belvedere to help, it was said, to prepare the farewell speech which was broadcast that night from King Edward to his subjects.

I shall never forget the short, powerful figure of Mr. Baldwin, so long a friend and almost paternal adviser to King Edward, as he stood at the Table in the House, telling us in simple words the dramatic story of his dealings with the King.

His voice shook, and once or twice he stopped in emotion. But there was something about him irresistibly reminiscent of that implacable statue of Cromwell which stands just outside the building. When the Premier sat down, he received the most prolonged and moving cheering it has ever been my lot to hear in the House of Commons.

1936 As he passed out of the House, I met him, and used a few words of praise for a fine performance. " I wish, Clynes," he said, " that I had had a little more time to prepare." He still seemed much shaken. I answered that no preparation could have improved that historic speech.

It was a great loss to the Empire and the world that a young man with such a remarkable gift of charm, and such sincere and definite feelings regarding peace and war, unemployment, slums and other modern problems, should have been removed from his high place where, had circumstances been happier, he might have made a great name as a human benefactor.

He took his place in the Flanders trenches while he was still a boy, and ex-service men all over the country can testify that he never shrank from his wartime comrades, and never forgot the horror and uselessness of war.

In later years, he visited almost every corner of the Empire, and studied deeply and long over problems which Colonials had considered grievances. He was one of our happiest unofficial Ambassadors, and was familiar with many vital subjects of Empire importance that cannot be found in any Blue Book.

Now he has settled into private life, become the Duke of Windsor, and married the woman for whom he gave up the world's greatest Throne. It is not likely that we shall see him again in England, but the good wishes of the British people will be with him always wherever he may go.

I saw King Edward only twice during his short reign. The first occasion was at the funeral of his father, when he looked a dark, distressed, dejected figure amid the gloomy splendour of Westminster Hall.

About two weeks later I was one of a few M.P.s chosen by the House to take a Loyal Address to the new King. He looked entirely different then, slender and distinguished in morning dress, young, lively and happy.

What a tragedy that one so widely loved was unable to bear the heavy burden of royalty.

During the crisis, the voices of certain extremist Members were raised vociferously demanding the abolition of the Crown in favour of a Republic. These voices were merely those of troubled souls crying in the wilderness and hoping against hope to be noticed. 1936

They represent neither British Labour thought nor the Parliamentary Labour Party. So long as the Throne remains loyal to the Constitution, British Labour remains loyal to the Throne.

The British Commonwealth of nations is not a musical comedy state like Monte Carlo. It has a population of some four hundred and sixty-five millions. Think of trying to elect a President for such a multitude, not for England, but for an Empire whose coloured millions outnumber Britain's people by six to one !

At present, the King's hands hold together one of the greatest factor for peace—the friendly alliance of the British Empire. Remove those hands from their work, and the structure would fall to bits in five years.

I am no supporter of the fulsome adulation of monarchs—I think it ridiculous. On the occasion of a Royal birth recently, a woman wrote to me to ask whether I did not consider it a " marvellous miracle " that a Royal baby should have been born on Christmas Day.

The sentiment is absurd. Dozens of babies are born every Christmas Day, and the phenomenon has long been accepted as part of the natural order of things.

1936 Any endeavour to invest royalty with a false halo does the monarchy harm. So, too, does the continuance of too much old-fashioned Court ceremonial, and the surrounding of the monarch by persons drawn from a narrow and privileged class. It hampers him in his work, and is apt to frustrate his good intentions.

In certain foreign countries within the last couple of decades, crises less sharp than that concerning a King's marriage have resulted in the clash of arms in civil war, because the Kings concerned have been led by nobles to that cruel expedient to try to maintain the middle-ages claims of a shaking Throne. In no case has the King eventually triumphed over the people.

In Britain, if there be degrees of respect shown towards the Throne by different sections of our population, the masses of wage-earners are behind no one in the sincerity of their emotions. When a few men rant for a Republic in the Commons, their words are magnified into a portent of Revolution, but it is not Revolution we want.

If it came to a clash between the Labour Party and the Throne, or between the King and any Party, the Party would be doomed to defeat. We do not wish to invite political annihilation, nor should we take up such a quarrel save over a Constitutional issue. That is one reason why the Trade Unions and the Labour Party have always displayed loyalty towards the Throne.

I have attended in the last forty-odd years nearly all the Conferences of my Party, and the meetings of the T.U.C. I remember only one year in which a Republican resolution was on the Agenda. It was not reached, and no one tried to make a place for it. This mood has not been reserved for public exhibition only. I have rarely heard a conversation on the subject even among groups of Members meeting privately.

Before the Labour Party was established, there was a considerable republican Party in this country. It is significant that as the Labour Party has grown, respect for the monarchy has increased and republican convictions have withered.

Whatever complaints we may have about the working of the Constitution, the most extreme of our economic doctrines are quite consistent with the continuance of a Constitutional Monarchy. We believe that the King is a guarantor of fairness to all political Parties, ours among the rest.

The monarchy is not the monopoly of any political group, however wealthy or well placed, and it is not at enmity with any section, however politically extreme. The stability of the Throne rests on that basis, and for that reason we deplore the use by any political Party of the flag of the nation or the personalities of the Royal Family.

During our period of office, those of us who came into contact with the Throne were treated impartially and fairly. Though most of us were drawn from a class which rarely came into touch with kings, we were never given reason to feel that as His Majesty's Ministers we were different in any way from our predecessors. I recall with complete satisfaction my official and personal conferences with the King.

I am confident, too, that in the future, when Labour is returned with a proper working majority and proceeds to legislate along lines hitherto unattempted, there will be nothing but support from the Throne so long as the new measures are kept within the limits of the Constitution and are in compliance with the People's will.

In theory, a number of Labour men are Republican even to-day, but their theories are no more than pleasant ideals. They have seen events in other lands, and would dislike the task of electing a President as much as I should myself.

During the Session of 1937, the House of Commons discussed this subject on two or three occasions, and it 1937 is worth while recording the clear and definite statements made on our behalf then by the Leader of the Labour Party. He said :

1937

> " The function of the Monarch is to express from time to time the collective view of this country. Constitutionally, he is an Estate of the Realm, and on certain occasions he has to play a very vital part in the preservation of our constitutional Government.
>
> " For him to play that part properly, he must be in close contact with every side of the national life. If the conditions under which he lives tend to cut him off from the masses of the people or to surround him with influences operating in one direction only, there may be grave political mischief. . . .
>
> " The whole conception of what is suitable provision for a monarch to-day really rests on the ideas of more than a century ago, when it was thought desirable to have the greatest possible gulf fixed between classes.
>
> " We are not raising our opposition merely on the ground of a cheese-paring economy. We are basing that opposition on broad principle. We agree that there should be an adequate and proper provision made for the Royal Family. . . .
>
> " I hope that we shall see a new start made. I believe this is necessary if constitutional monarchy is to survive the present age. . . .
>
> " The utmost simplicity in the monarchy will, I believe, bind together people and monarchy more closely than ever before."

Chapter XIX

1935–1937—Trouble in Palestine—A country promised to two races—Lawrence of Arabia versus Lord Balfour—War in the Holy Land—The Spanish Civil War—Interference by other nations—Black versus Red in Europe—Communists and Fascists fight in London—Hooligans' politics—War risks over the colour of a shirt—George VI—Recent changes in the Commons—A sketch of Mr. Baldwin—Neville Chamberlain takes charge.

One of the most troublesome legacies left us by the War was the administration of Palestine. During the trouble with Mussolini over Abyssinia, the grave disputes between Jews and Arabs in Palestine flared up into open warfare—or rather 1935 extensive massacre, and Britain, despite the danger of weakening her forces waiting in Egypt to resist a possible Italian invasion, had to draft regiment after regiment to the Holy Land.

In order to trace the cause of the Palestine trouble, it is necessary to review briefly recent events in that country as they touched British politics.

A Turkish Colony before the War, Palestine always contained a number of fiercely nationalist Jews, who refused to use the language dictated by the conquerors, and dreamed with the terrible Hebrew patience of a Judea restored to its ancient glory.

During the War, it seemed that a curse had descended on the land. Starved by an Allied blockade and by cruel Turkish taxes, this troubled land was smitten in 1915 by the worst pest of locusts within the memory of man. This made payment of taxes impossible ; so the Turks came and ruthlessly cut down the olive trees which were the chief source of revenue.

In Jerusalem and the other cities ordinarily dependent on the pilgrim traffic, whoselsale starvation took place.

When Allenby walked humbly into the Holy City at the head of his conquering armies, the shops had nothing to sell but radishes and post-cards. The single-line railway was busy carrying troops, guns, munitions and army supplies, but food was brought as fast as possible for the helpless civil population. To compensate the inhabitants for the army occupation of Jerusalem, the Royal Engineers built a magnificent new reservoir on the site of one used by Pontius Pilate and Herod.

A great part of Allenby's triumph over the Turks was due to that strange figure, part soldier, part statesman, Lawrence of Arabia. In order to win the support of the Arabs, Lawrence procured for them the British Government's promise that Palestine should be restored to them after the War. At the same time, Lord Balfour bought for Britain the immense financial and moral support of the Jews by promising Palestine as a national home for the Jewish people.

After the War there were thus two claimants for the same country. It became "The Promised Land," indeed !

Lawrence refused the galaxy of decorations and honours that were offered him, and asked instead a single boon—the redemption of the British promise made through him to the Arab race. After prevarications and delays, it was finally refused, and Lawrence turned bitterly from what might have been a great career in the Foreign Office, and chose unrecognisable service to the native races he felt he had helped to betray.

It is said that, during one of the discussions he had with leading statesman on the Arab question, he engaged Lord Balfour savagely in argument, in an ante-room of Buckingham Palace while waiting for an audience with the King, and that the statesman whom many said was heartless, broke down and actually wept.

Be that as it may, the Government policy after the
1935 War was to support the return of Jews to Palestine ;

and the fierce Arab population resented this invasion, first by protest and abuse, and very soon by violence. Riots occurred at Gaza, Beersheba, Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Jericho. Troops were used to quell the disturbances, and two thousand Arabs attacked the British garrison at Semakh, driving them back with one hundred casualties left in enemy hands.

In 1920 Sir Herbert Samuel became the first British High Commissioner of Palestine, and did a great work in restoring order and confidence in the country. But the racial animosity between Jews and Arabs could not be quelled in a decade; and in 1936 it imperilled not alone our control in the Holy Land, but our prestige throughout the East.

For some weeks, Parliamentary business at Westminster was concerned chiefly with events in Palestine, which grew more serious than the public at home was ever allowed to believe. A minor war developed against a guerrilla army of Arabs; and our difficulties were not made less by the hostile attitude of the Jews, who were willing enough to accept British military protection, but endeavoured at the same time to make a national income from the defenders' army by selling it sprouting wheat, rotten oranges and putrid food at prices which even the Army, notably careless as it is of the taxpayers' money, found excessive. 1935

Motorised columns, specially fitted for travel across the shifting sands that had known the chariots and the horsemen of Joshua, sped across the arid plains; and battles were fought with rifle, field-gun and hand-grenade among the very hills where Christ uttered his solitary Commandment: "Love one another."

Eventually, the Arabs were quelled, and an uneasy peace was restored. In the rioting and disorder which preceded it, the Jews lost ten times as many casualties as the Arabs; but they continued to go back to their ancient land from all over the world. Whether Britain will be able to hold them there remains to be seen. Other plans, equally uncertain, may yet have to be tried.

Parliamentary questions had hardly ceased to echo concerning the Palestine situation when a new trouble sent a stir of excitement and uneasiness through Westminster. A revolt in Spain against the Republican Government was led by General Franco, who proposed to set himself up as Europe's third great Fascist Dictator. After a few superficial successes, Franco was on the verge of complete defeat; though he had the Spanish Army and most of the Navy with him, the People were against him.

But at this point other Fascist countries saw fit to interfere. The chance to encircle France with a ring of watching enemies was a tempting one to those nations whom she had humiliated by her arrogance after the War. Germany and Italy began to pour " volunteers " into Spain; and Franco's fainting forces were renewed with the soldiery of other lands.

The fault was not all on one side. France and Russia retaliated by sending first munitions and then men to the aid of the Spanish Government. These legionaries saved Madrid from falling when Franco's foreigners were hammering at its very gates. Since then, the struggle that all military experts said would be over in a few weeks has been drawn out for long over a year.

1936 The League of Nations did what it could. Its efforts were hopelessly handicapped from the first, because Italy and Germany had openly declared their contempt for its edicts on previous occasions; while France and Russia, content to offer lip-service, saw no reason to allow their even less scrupulous opponents to triumph over them in Spain.

It seemed, when an agreement was reached among the chief European nations to set up a non-intervention blockade round the Spanish borders, that a chance still remained for the Spaniards to settle their form of Government among themselves. But the incident when a German warship was bombed, and its naval consorts subsequently took reprisal by bombarding a defenceless city, put an end to any hopes in that direction.

Spain, it seems, is fated to be the cockpit where Black and Red are to fight a preliminary battle for European supremacy. France may perhaps hardly be called "Red" yet; but if the Fascist influence around her grows too strong, the ferocities of the Reign of Terror will awake again within her, and there may well be bred some modern Napoleon who will once more march through blood to the farthest corners of Europe.

A feeble echo of the Fascist-Communist dispute that 1936 is growing to such terrible proportions on the Continent was heard in Britain a short time ago. Sir Oswald Mosley's imitation army decided on what appeared to be a deliberately provocative "march" through the East End of London, which includes a large population of Jews and many of Communist sympathies. The Blackshirt attitude towards Jews has been expressed very often; it is the attitude of the gutter-child who shouts vulgar abuse and throws stones at whatever he cannot understand.

When the much-advertised Fascist "march" took place, it turned first into a scamper and then into a riot. Windows were broken, children and old people were stoned, broken bottles and sticks set with nails were used as weapons, there was kicking and biting and gouging, and stock was stolen from Jewish shops.

Questions were asked in Parliament as to whether this unsavoury display could be made the last of its kind. The comment of the nation was contemptuous upon the hooligans who had indulged in such an orgy under a quasi-political and pseudo-patriotic banner; but peaceful citizens wanted no more of it.

I do not say that the shouting youths in black shirts and tight trousers were entirely to blame; adolescence and hooliganism always go hand in hand, and there are persons who remain adolescent far beyond their normal period of years. I have no doubt that many Communists were as eager as their opponents to create a disturbance and make fools of themselves;

But when a measure was brought before Parliament, as a result of this East End rioting, to suppress the use of so-called " political uniforms," I voted for it. I do not want to see my country degraded beneath the tyranny of a shirt, or indulging in public worship of the swastika or the sickle and hammer. When I meet a friend, I prefer to shake hands in the usual manner, rather than dash out my hand in the theatricalities of a salute popular among the licentiate Romans or fling up my fist to imitate a little Lenin. The Romans are dead and I prefer to deal with the world we live in.

The rising of Mussolini, the coming of Hitler, the attempts to overthrow Socialism in Austria and Spain, and the development of the Croix de Fer in France, have been offered us as reasons for Fascist activities in England. I can see no sense in such an application.

In Italy, the Communists created such a state of chaos after the War that the way was opened for Mussolini to restore order, even if in doing so he created a tyrannical Dictatorship. Misrule was considered better than no rule at all.

In Germany, the same tale was told. Communism nearly brought the country to ruin. Nazi-ism may yet do the same. If so, it will doubtless be superseded by something else ; meanwhile it is being given a trial.

In Austria, Dolfuss, threatened simultaneously by Italian Fascist influence, German Nazi conspiracy, and Communist plots, seized despotic power, destroyed the practical success of Socialist effort in Vienna, and ultimately perished by his own sharp weapons.

In Spain, the wide extension of suffrage followed by the destruction of the Church led to violent reaction, whose final form yet remains to be seen.

In France, Republican democracy has long been threatened by various Fascist organisations. Communism has recently attained significant dimensions there. An examination of recent French electoral results is instructive. The " Right " lost only 9 seats ; the " Centre " lost 33. The Socialist groups gained 35 between them, while the Communists increased their strength by 62. 1937

But they persistently refused to share the responsibilities of Leon Blum's Government.

In all these countries the growth of Communism has driven sane citizens in their thousands into the ranks of the Fascists, on the principle that it is better to accept the choice of one evil than to suffer the alternative. Any marked increase of Communism here would recruit the British Fascist ranks just as heavily, even though they do not possess a leader of the calibre of Hitler or Mussolini, or even Franco.

But I do not think we need fear such a catastrophe. 1937 In Britain, Communist successes have been negligible. The one Parliamentary seat held by them was won at the expense of the Labour Party and for local and industrial reasons.

In Municipal service, nearly twenty years of Communist effort have provided no practical results. The country does not want Communism, no matter how it is disguised. Nor does it want Fascism. It will crush impartially outbreaks of hooliganism from either side, and if they should ever be disguised as efforts to set up a British Dictatorship, they will be summarily treated.

There remain two perils in the Black and Red controversy. One is that voters in Britain will be told in the future, as they have been told in the past, that Communism and Labour are one, and are equally dangerous to British liberty.

That is nonsense. The Socialist case here requires no conspirators nor foreign labels. Its strength lies in its constitutional appeal ; its only weapon is the ballot-box.

A much worse and more far-reaching aspect is that Fascism and Communism between them have created a new and tremendous political factor in the range of world war causes. It is not too much to say that the next European War will be fought, unless British sanity can prevent it, in an endeavour to set up a Black or a Red dictatorship of thought, not in a country, but across the entire Continent.

Economic and other provocations to war are bad enough, but it seems now that whole Peoples are stricken with madness which makes them wish to spill their blood and expose their women and babies to green clouds of poison-gas simply to settle whether the national salute shall be a raised arm or a clenched fist !

Such childish quarrels do not appeal to the average British voter. It is for him to keep himself clear of them, or his country will be drawn into a vortex of continental politics which will then certainly end in a war in which the rest of the Empire will have neither sympathy nor part.

1937 In the person of George VI we have a monarch likely to continue our democratic practice. He is the centre of the anxious good wishes of all political parties, and I believe that he will worthily carry on the great traditions of his father.

He has always been keenly interested in industrial affairs, attending many council meetings of the Industrial Welfare Society, and it is certain that his influence has had great effect on the attitude of employers towards Labour, and that it will have more.

As a member of the Coronation Committee and a Privy Councillor, I had something to do with the arrangements for the King's Coronation ; and in that trying ceremony he bore himself well. I do not think that the Royal Family should be always " on parade " and never enjoy a moment of private life ; and I believe the time has come to shear away a great part of the useless pomp and ceremonial in which they are often forced to take part. But whether these things remain his duty in full or not, we need never fear that George VI will fall short of his responsibilities to the nation.

The Coronation was succeeded by great changes in the House of Commons. Mr. Baldwin retired with an Earldom ; MacDonald gave up his post as Lord President of the Council ; and Mr. Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister of a Government that still prefers to call itself " National," though it continues to be uncompromisingly Tory in all its actions.

There is no parallel case to the House of Commons career of Mr. Baldwin. For years he was an unknown private Member. He entered the House after I did, and I can recall no notice being taken of him before the War.

Subsequently, after serving in one or two minor positions, occasion took him by the hand and placed him at the head of the Government when Bonar Law, to whom he had been Private Secretary, retired from the Premiership. At the time, everyone expected Lord Curzon to become Prime Minister—and not the least Lord Curzon himself. The emergence of Baldwin from the shadows behind Bonar Law caused as much surprise as the appearance of the apparition in *Hamlet*.

In the House of Commons, Mr. Baldwin was always most approachable. Indeed, he himself approached the humbler Members not only of his own Party, but of his opponents. I never knew a more hard-working Minister, nor the head of a Government or Opposition leader who spent so much time in his place in the House of Commons.

I say nothing here of his public work, with most of which I disagreed. I am thinking of his character. That was the part of him which was such an asset to his side. Brilliance belonged to other men, but other men did not displace him in spite of his defects and defeats. If events floored him one day, the next day he was on his feet because of his varied talents and a rare restraint which retained for him every friend, and more often than not disarmed his foes.

The phrase—" You can trust me ! "—was sarcastically tacked upon him by an antagonistic Press. Many famous politicians have been irretrievably handicapped by phrases. " Wait and see," and " We don't know where we are " are two examples of many. But in the case of Mr. Baldwin, a phrase added to his fame. It epitomised him and his pipe in the public mind. It was true—he could be trusted.

His successor, Neville Chamberlain, has been underestimated by many. He has shown himself in past 1937 years equal to a few big jobs, and he has remained long undisturbed in the post next to Mr. Baldwin when other able and experienced colleagues stepped into some bog of trouble and had to resign. For the purposes of his Party, he was a great success as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and success there usually ensures a future Premiership.

He is not popular, but he has qualities of efficiency so high that they go far to balance the lack of other gifts. He is not totally devoid of cheerfulness, and he has considerable powers of clear exposition and special pleading.

The election verdict of 1931 was not given to set up speedily a Protectionist system far beyond the most extreme proposals of Joseph Chamberlain. But the son, having unlimited numbers behind him, has gone ahead with his Tariff proposals in spite of the most bitter and logical objections.

It was his luck to be lifted to the post of Prime Minister which his abler brother and brilliant father just failed to secure. That he was in no sense a success as Director of National Service during the War did not prevent a perseverance in State service which has no brought its reward.

1937 The most valuable quality he reveals is in showing that he does not care to take risks, and knows how to avoid them. Therein he will prove to be a safe man, and his friends are apparently willing to leave to time and experience the question of whether that quality will make up entirely for lack of imagination.

Politics nowadays are most successfully run by men who possess accurate minds. Certainly Neville Chamberlain understands business methods. Years ago, he suggested to his father a new natural source for making hemp. Later, he became head of Hoskins and Sons, a big Midland marine firm, Chairman of Elliot's Metal Company, and a Director of the Birmingham Small Arms Company which handles all the big British Army contracts.

He has not the friendly pipe of Baldwin or the warm eloquence of the early MacDonald, nor has he the assertive courage of Lloyd George. His voice is high-pitched, his face hard and stern. He seldom smiles.

But he has health, and he has the Chamberlain brain 1937 for figures. He is an ardent fisherman, and he has the fisherman's merciless patience. If he has no picture-postcard qualities, at least, it is better to have this cold, clear-headed, Midland business manager to lead the Government than a jack-booted Dictator of the continental type.

He may make history in the next few years.

Chapter XX

Personalities—Austen Chamberlain—Churchill—Maxton—Cripps—Citrine—Bramley—Burns—Hore-Belisha—Hoare—Hayday—Will Thorne—Charles Dukes—Sidney Webb—Blatchford—William Morris—The Glasiers—Ben Turner—Tom Mann—Ben Tillett—Ernest Bevin—William Graham—Snowden—Balfour.

1937 One of the events of recent years felt most deeply by the House of Commons was the death of Sir Austen Chamberlain, at a time when his brother stood on the threshold of the highest Parliamentary fame.

There has not been in Parliamentary life in my time any figure similar to Sir Austen. He was the last of the Great Victorians.

He enjoyed every advantage of training and preparation for a Parliamentary career, and he shared much of the influence of a great name. But his progress was essentially due to his own individual qualities, and a fine capacity for work. Above all, it resulted from the unquestioned possession of personal honour and political integrity.

He would not touch anything tainted, or retain high Ministerial position if by doing so he had to suffer the slightest blemish. He resigned more than once, and accepted without a whisper of complaint the blame which really belonged to others.

He declined to take any office in the National Government of 1931, but became during that Parliament of greater use in public life than if he had held a very high post. His wisdom and influence during that Parliament may be placed in the list of great services which one of the most selfless of men ever rendered to his country.

An arresting and very different figure in modern politics is that of Mr. Churchill.

I can recall him when first he went as a Candidate to my native town of Oldham, looking more like a boy than a youth. Even then, his experience and skill made him seem older than his years. I was one of a few local leaders who had to meet him on a political question at the time, and he disagreed so flatly with us that his candour gained him more support than his acquiescence might have done. A threat to defeat him left him unmoved.

I cannot recall any man who has filled so many offices, or in such a picturesque manner. If he has been inconsistent to a degree, he has excused his faults by the success of most of his administrative work. A dangerous opponent, he has often proved a still more dangerous ally.

In the House we have long known him as our most brilliant and entertaining debater. He is universally admired, but not universally trusted—because people fear his judgment rather than doubt his honesty. 1937

The nearest counterpart to Churchill on the Labour side is James Maxton. He is a likeable and disarming personality. As a Revolutionary he looks the part, but he has such a reserve of humour and goodwill towards men that they do not fear him—they are fond of him !

He is a passionate advocate of the Socialism of the barricades. He hugs his faith as a private possession, though he denies the right to such personal property. He fails to convert many people to Socialism mainly because he spends so much of his time condemning Socialism for its pinkness.

Maxton might have been one of the greatest assets to the Labour and Socialist Movement, had his mind been able to work in a realistic manner. He might have been our premier propagandist. As it is, he will probably be remembered merely as a picturesque figure in a cause for which, if need be, he would be willing to die.

A less picturesque Parliamentarian is Stafford Cripps. I have heard someone say that his very name smacks of Dickensian villainy.

He served little, if any, apprenticeship in the building of the Labour Party. His place seemed ready made for him. He won an easy Election victory at a time when Labour was popular, and walked almost immediately to the Front Bench in the House of Commons to fill one of the highest-paid posts in the Government. He lifted on his way the title which made him Sir Stafford.

He is not of the working class, and these favours were the gifts of fortune rather than the rewards of work and waiting. None the less, the quality of his work was worthy of anything he got, and favours were not of his seeking.

In the Commons as in the Courts, this great lawyer could speak with power and eloquence ; but on the platform he would lapse into some crude or provoking utterance which would give joy to our opponents, who saw to it that his words went echoing wherever they could do harm to Cripps's own side.

Like a few other notable recruits, he soon became a liability to his Party, and at certain stages his speeches made for us very grave difficulties.

A Labour man who has received as much criticism
1937 as Cripps, but with less cause, is Sir Walter Citrine, Secretary to the Trades Union Congress.

His opponents have found cause to fear him, but there were ungenerous murmurings from members of his own side when he accepted a knighthood. In any other business, his friends would have been well pleased.

A Trade Union leader must be a combination of spokesman, statesman, lawyer, financier, negotiator and supervisor. He must of all things be an exceptionally able advocate. He must have international associations, and master a crop of intricate problems arising from contacts with foreign workers.

1937 Citrine has been second to none in the application of these qualifications, and makes full use of them on a salary lower than that of the Secretary of a First Division football club, or a minor cinema star. Comparitively low payment is not singular to him. There are scores of Trade Union officials whose work, in quality and range, is equal to that of many financiers and business chiefs receiving salaries of thousands a year.

His predecessor in his Trade Union post was Fred Bramley. Bramley possessed a notable gift of explaining economics from the Socialist standpoint by means of effective stories. He was a lecturer of the missionary grade, whose most convincing arguments were to be found in his funny tales.

A famous Parliamentarian who uttered many criticisms of Trade Unionism was John Burns. He has been an arresting figure—bearded, thick-set, powerful, endowed with a parade-ground voice and dynamic energy. As long ago as 1887, he said :

> " Reckless assumption by the Unions of duties and responsibilities that only the State can discharge regarding sick and superannuation benefits is crushing out the larger Unions by unbearably taxing their members. The fear of being unable to discharge their responsibilities as friendly societies makes them submit to encroachments by the masters without protest, and they are degenerating into mere upper-class rate-reducing institutions."

Continued efforts to improve this doctrine have since placed unskilled workers on a level of Trade Union power not inferior to the skilled workmen once thought to be the only groups of wage-earners who could be organised.

Despite his Labour views, Burns remained officially attached to the Liberal Party. He became a Liberal Cabinet Minister in 1906, and rejoiced in telling his friends that when Campbell-Bannerman offered him the post he patted the great Party leader on the back and told him that it was the best day's work he had ever done !

No more remarkable instance of self-imposed suppression of speech has ever been known than that of John Burns. It was the more remarkable because he had always formerly been so voluble and combative.

No one can say, even now, what is the explanation of his curious silence. Since 1914 he has, I believe, made only one short public speech—and that on the colourless subject of London bridges.

I can recall only one similar instance of high competence for eloquent speeches and a continued refusal to make any. It is the case of Thomas Sexton, who in the days when the Irish Party was a power at Westminster was one of the most brilliant speakers in that or any other assembly. Sexton suddenly passed out of the House of Commons, and his famous name was quickly forgotten because he could not subsequently be induced to say a word.

1937 A man who is not doomed to silence and who can speak well on occasion is Leslie Hore-Belisha. His name will never be forgotten so long as his safety-crossings remain in our city streets.

He is a man of indomitable energy, and has dealt drastically with our traffic, saving many lives and tackling one of the most difficult problems of modern times. He has been Financial Secretary to the Treasury, is now War Secretary, and was in his time President of the Oxford Union—a privilege he shares, I believe, with two other Cabinet Ministers.

Sir Samuel Hoare shares with him the distinction of being a possible future Prime Minister. He has been in turn Air Minister, Secretary for India, Foreign Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty and Home Secretary. He was made a scapegoat in the Hoare-Laval sensation in 1935, but his abilities have never been questioned.

He is an unostentatious worker ; and in his leisure hours an expert skater and lawn tennis player.

Hoare has spent much of his life on the Front Bench. Much of the best Party work, however, is done by sincere and persevering back-benchers, or even by people outside the House altogether, whose names remain obscure save in the golden roll of those who serve faithfully.

Labour has many examples. Arthur Heyday, M.P., is one of them. His patience and courage in the presentation of a case, whether in the House of Commons or when dealing with a Trade Union dispute, are not bettered by anyone I know. 1937

It was said of Tim Healy, who had one of the finest lawyer brains in Parliament, that he alone understood the details of the Irish Land Act. I would say of Heyday that he stood highest among any group of experts dealing with the intricate branches of Unemployment Legislation and other Insurance Laws.

A figure of equal value to the Labour cause was Will Thorne. He had no education at all before going to work at eight years of age. He picked up somehow the faculty to read and write, but he thought so swiftly that his writing was a scrawl and he seemed to be able to read a page at a glance.

He rose above all lack of education. The loss of grammar meant nothing to him, and his burning sincerity and command of rugged English quickly won and always kept the workers' attention.

His record in Trade Union service is unique. As founder and pioneer of a Labourers' Union he disproved the rooted belief that unskilled men could not be organised. He maintained the leadership of a Union which became the most powerful of its kind in the country.

He seemed never to know illness or fatigue—or leisure. When he retired at the age of seventy-seven, his exit was marked with many tributes for services which everybody prized.

Mr. Thorne's successor in the Union of which I have long been President is Mr. Charles Dukes. Apart from his natural gifts and an acquired talent for secretarial work, he possesses two outstanding advantages. He had a long workshop experience in a variety of jobs in early life, and he gained a training in Trade Union work by continued endeavour in all the posts from the humblest almost to the highest.

He has great platform ability, a constructive and practical mind, and his faculty for exposition enables him to deliver speeches of high oratorical merit and sound sense which his facts reinforce.

1937 A man who has used somewhat similar talents in an entirely different direction is Sidney Webb. When he took the title of Lord Passfield, his fine record under his own name made it impossible for people to remember to use his new title.

At his best he had an excellent House of Commons style, and in Committee or Cabinet his art of compression saved not only his own time, but the time of his colleagues as well. He could frame with ease a Resolution, or draft a King's Speech, while his Cabinet colleagues might still be discussing some minor items to go into it.

The work of the Webbs has placed Labour under a very heavy obligation to them. The Trades Unions as well as the Socialist Party have been able for more than forty years to turn to their books and pamphlets for arguments and ideas, and to find in their histories and research work an armoury of valuable material which has protected many an organisation in times of difficulty and attack. Their work has never been sufficiently acknowledged, but this will never trouble them.

Outside the ranks of industrial leaders and accepted propagandists, there were two men in the early years of my attachment to the Labour movement who served with a distinction that should never be forgotten. They were Robert Blatchford and A. M. Thompson of *The Clarion.*

This paper lived for more than forty years. Much of its existence was a struggle, but for the greater part of its time it was a brilliant and penetrating missionary, and preached Socialism in terms acceptable to the English temperament.

Thompson was sparkling, witty and gay, and his knowledge of other countries gave a flavour to his work not then common in Labour journalism.

These men made sacrifices to serve. They could have done better for themselves on other papers.

Blatchford's *Merrie England* became the Bible of the Socialist politician, with the difference that it was not kept on the shelf for occasional reference. It was 1937 carried in a mood of pride and thanksgiving by devoted comrades who used it as the groundwork for explaining the Socialist gospel.

Karl Marx is at the head of a long list of advanced thinkers, but his work and name were both unknown among millions of British workmen who, before we had a Labour Party at all, had to be turned into Socialists. *Merrie England* brought home to Englishmen the ideas of Marx's celebrated " Nine Chapters " just as forcefully as James I's Authorised Version of the Bible brought home that story to a country which was ignorant of the former foreign versions.

It is safe to say that no single piece of work ever did so much to make British Socialists as did the writing of *Merrie England.* When the book became known, one million copies were printed, to be sold at 1d.

Until that time, many millions of working people had never heard of politics except in reference to Liberals and Tories. To try to build up a workman's Party was regarded by many workmen as not only ungodly but unhinged.

Blatchford was always candid and direct, even in circumstances where frankness had to be employed without mercy. I recall a great cotton stoppage in Lancashire about forty years ago. I acted with a few others in arranging a monster meeting which Blatchford agreed to attend.

Cotton operatives were then far removed from Labour political aims. They voted Liberal or Tory by habit or parental command. They had been long idle when the meeting took place, and were hopeless and dispirited.

Blatchford did not offer them platitudes. He told them the truth about themselves. He showed them how easy it would be to gain their freedom if they would, but chilled them in the end by saying he could do no good with them, and that we should have to wait for a new generation.

He was right. He preferred to tell the truth, rather than talk nonsense about the gallant fight they were waging. They could fight by walking together out of the mills, but they could not walk together to the polling booths and fight the same enemy there.

1937 Blatchford is eighty-seven now, and has seen much of his work come to full fruition.

William Morris was another of the great figures of early Socialism. His inspiration remains potent in spite of the fact that he had little interest in politics in the Party sense.

He was a rebel against the capitalist system because, under it, there could be no happiness in work for the great majority ; and to him work without joy meant an existence devoid of meaning. His *Dream of John Ball* gives an idea of the form of society to which he aspired. It is a Utopia widely different from those imagined by other modern creators of ideal commonwealths. It is the direct descendant of the imaginary kingdom of Thomas More, to whom Morris bore some resemblance in character and spirit.

Morris was misunderstood, but warmly admired. He was an employer who attacked other employers. He was not only a dreamer, but a skilled craftsman who attracted the money of wealthy people.

To go to Kelmscott House in Hammersmith, as I did often during my earlier visits to London, was to approach the shrine which then attracted all men who were thinking of a British Socialist State.

A Socialist propagandist with the qualities of a poet was Bruce Glasier. He was staying with me in Oldham on the morning when we opened our Sunday papers to read that William Morris was dead ! Glasier cried like a child, and many another Socialist must have done the same that day. Yet it does not often happen that a man sheds tears for the death of another man.

Morris was a capable business dealer, and he asked prices for his products which put them beyond the reach of any but the rich.

"There are no greater fools," he said one day, "than the rich who buy my wall-papers—except those who don't!"

That he was a great poet is, I think, established. Swinburne placed him as a spiritual descendant of Homer. His value as an artist and craftsman is also assured. As 1937
an employer he sought to practise the industrial idealism preached by Ruskin. In his workshops no servile eyes looked down while the master passed.

He encouraged his employees to regard themselves as fellow-craftsmen, and it was his noble ambition to "make the life of each of his workers a poem and a song of praise," and to spread the same spirit far and wide beyond his personal sphere out into the world of trade.

I have mentioned Bruce Glasier. He and his wife rank next to Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb in valuable joint service to Labour. In point of time, sacrifice and quality, it was second to none.

The Webbs served in the study and the lecture-room, and their books formed a little library of Labour teaching. The Glasiers were propagandists. For many years they were prominent platform figures, particularly in the north of England and in Scotland.

Bruce Glasier was a true poet, and his songs and verse were an inspiration. His wife was the greatest of the early women propagandists. She did not belong to the working class, but in early life she was hurt by realising the poverty in our larger towns, and by the sight of suffering children. She was eloquent and fearless, and great audiences were deeply moved by her sincerity.

Another North of England pioneer was Ben Turner. His intimate friends never thought that in later life he would achieve the rank of knighthood.

Honour he had earned. From youth to old age, he had faithfully toiled in the Trade Union and Socialist cause, and served in every capacity from the humblest to the highest. His qualities as a speaker were enhanced in the North by his ready use of a broad Yorkshire dialect.

A great organiser, he was as fluent with his pen as his tongue, and made daily contributions for some years to Labour's literary output. He had the singular characteristic in later life of carrying a pocket Bible and using it lavishly. It was quite in keeping with his personal life and the habits of a truly practising Christian.

Of Tom Mann it was once said that he possessed a tidal intellect. Though Mann was everything by turns, and nothing long, no one could charge him with lack of principle.

He was impatient, restless, and new aspects of old aspirations attracted him so that he was always with the newest movement. A robust orator, he had small patience for administrative work or for the constructive service of negotiation.

These omissions were very pronounced during his short term as General Secretary to the Engineering Union. The post offered unusual opportunities for solid and enduring service, but Mann had been for so long an irresponsible agitator that the Board-Room cramped him intolerably and offers at compromise made him lose his temper.

Ben Tillett was a somewhat similar figure, though he did not change his allegiance with the seasons. He remained faithful to Socialism and to the Dockers' Union.

He was small in inches, but seemed to grow to the height of a tall and commanding personality in periods of impassioned oratory. He was a picturesque figure, and at times moved men to a mood of martyrdom.

He was a successful Dockers' Secretary until, in later life, he was succeeded by Mr. Ernest Bevin, who has carried on his predecessor's record to a point where he 1937 is generally known as the Dockers' K.C.

A Labour man whom I must not omit to mention is the late William Graham. In early life he was fortunate to receive a public school education which later continued at Edinburgh University.

He served on the Edinburgh Town Council, and acquired such varied training that when he reached the House of Commons he was marked as a coming man.

He had a fine brain, untiring industry, a persuasive style, and a memory excelled by no man in recent Parliaments. Graham rendered enormous service to the Party and passed too early to his grave.

The late Mr. Bonar Law might have been his equal in memory power, for both could deliver a long speech packed with fact and argument without reference even to a slip of paper, and I never remember either of them being caught out in a point of accuracy.

Another paragon of accuracy was Philip Snowden. 1937
I knew him from early manhood to ripe old age, and for many years we worked and preached together, especially in the North of England.

He was far abler than most of the lecturers and propagandists at the weekly meetings held during the building years of the Labour Party. He had enjoyed a better education than most of the young men of his time, and to a touch of inborn genius he had been careful to add great industry and extensive reading.

He, too, had a great memory, and he acquired the art of making figures speak eloquently and with emphasis. His speeches differed from ordinary political addresses and assumed the quality of informing lectures.

He was a striking contrast to the man who was for years his leader—Ramsay MacDonald. Snowden never left anyone in doubt as to his meaning. He feared nobody, and was a reliable man to have on your side.

His health was never very robust, and in his early manhood doctors said after an accident that he would never walk again. But the indomitable spirit which later served Britain in many crises brought him slowly back to health, though he had to learn to walk all over again.

In the House of Commons he was frequently Labour's star turn, and was equally formidable either in the delivery of a prepared speech or in the cut and thrust of Debate. His encounters with Churchill were a joy to Members, and at times they reached the height of some of the combats between Gladstone and Disraeli. Though these two successors of the great showed not the slightest mercy to one another across the floor of the House, not an atom of respect was lost by either.

Snowden, despite his cutting tongue, could be warm-hearted and merry, and would often delight us at the fireside with a fund of Yorkshire stories which made him splendid company.

I think it would be correct to say that he had but three luxuries. The first and greatest was his work. He revelled in it, and was never so happy on holiday as in the rush and stress of political excitement.

The second was his devotion to books and music. As a balance to much heavier reading (and he never ceased to hunt for information), he relished detective stories, and the pages of the criminal thriller were given his warmest welcome. The more strenuous his work became, the faster he read modern and classic detective novels.

Lastly, he smoked a good number of cigarettes. He held them always in a long holder, and in conversation his acquaintances could often tell what was coming by the poise and movement of his hand.

A certain foreign statesman of world fame once said that he feared the decisive stab of Snowden's cigarette more than the whole armed might of pre-War Germany !

I have not selected particular Labour or Parliamentary personalities to the exclusion of others. I have offered some comment as the names of men and women I have met and worked with have come into my mind. If I attempted a comprehensive list, a volume would be filled, for many of the less-known men have splendid records to their names. In that volume would shine the names of J. S. Middleton of the Labour Party and
1937 H. S. Lindsay of the Parliamentary Party for a lifetime of unexcelled secretarial service.

I cannot conclude these personal sketches without reference to a man who left as deep an impression on me as any I have ever met at Westminster. This man was Arthur Balfour. 1937

When Balfour got back into the Commons in 1906, after having been beaten in Manchester, his attention was less arrested by the new Liberal hordes than by a few of us who represented the new Labour Party. His biographer wrote of him :

> " The Labour Members who sat in the new House seemed to him a far more significant portent than the triumphant hosts of the Government."

I remember that Balfour's return to the House through the gateway of one of the City of London seats was at first the signal for laughter and jeers. He was like a defeated general walking behind the chariot of triumphant Liberalism. But before long those who came to jeer remained to praise.

To his many great abilities Balfour added a personal courtesy and forbearance which wore down the loudest abuse of his opponents. And there was none to equal him in adroitness.

On the Liberal side they could not find his match. Asquith, Lloyd George, Churchill and others of the newer men were reaching the peak of their form, but Balfour made them seem clumsy by verbal cleverness and Parliamentary skill such as I have never seen approached.

He was particularly friendly towards Labour Members at a time when we were considered men on show. I remember his expressing great admiration at a speech from Stephen Walsh. Walsh came from the coal-pit to the Commons and looked and walked like a miner. But he spoke like a scholar, quoting Shakespeare and the classics, and Balfour marvelled at the ex-pit boy's prose.

The first and the last times on which I saw Balfour afford as great a contrast as one can imagine.

When I was a youth I went one night straight from my work in Oldham to a great Conservative gathering in Manchester. Balfour, then at the height of his fame, was Chief Secretary for Ireland, and consequently the most embarrassed Minister in the Government. His duties required enormous capacity and great physical courage.

I managed to get into the meeting, and was pushed to the front, where I got a good view of the speaker. When it came to the usual vote of confidence, I was indiscreet enough to put up my hand against him. Only that and nothing more.

My modest protest was met with howls of condemnation and savage shouts of " Chuck him out ! " I was threatened with violence, and only the presence of some kindly policemen, who formed a circle round me, enabled me to escape undamaged.

The last time I saw him was at a little gathering in the Speaker's Courtyard at Westminster. Balfour was then an old man approaching retirement, and a magnificent motor car had been purchased as a presentation to him for use in his declining years.

I was privileged on behalf of the Labour Party to attend the speech-making, and to add mine to the tributes in which we expressed our affection and admiration for a great House of Commons figure.

I said of Balfour that though he had faced and provoked many political opponents during his long career, he could be assured that he left the stage without a single personal enemy. It must be something to be able
1937 to feel that at the end of a long Parliamentary career !

In my own career the wheel of fortune has been turned in my favour by the untiring labours of troops of friends and by the skill of my Manchester Agent, Alderman A. James. I bow to Mr. James for twenty-five years of devoted service.

Chapter XXI

Looking forward—Government in the future—Is the House of Commons useless ?—Defects in the present system—Disorder in the House—Why " scenes " occur—Useless business men in Parliament—Preponderance of rich men among our rulers—One peer owns the West End—Scathing figures from the House of Lords—Abolish the Upper House—Changes needed in the Commons.

In drawing towards the end of these political memories of mine, I am constrained to look forward into the future of politics generally in this country. A politician is usually looking forward or backward, and I am no exception to the rule. 1937

It has been suggested lately in many quarters that the constitution and duties of the House of Commons need considerable revision to bring them up to the needs of the times. As to constitution, that must inevitably change from election to election ; and the duties are fairly well realised even if not always perfectly performed.

But it seems that thousands of electors are drifting towards the more dangerous view, that the House has outgrown its usefulness altogether. They are being misled. I can quote from a widely read weekly paper, of democratic views, in which a writer says :

> " To go to the House day after day early in the afternoon, and stay there till nearly midnight ! To listen, if they sit in at debates, to speeches that seldom rise above the mediocre and often sink towards unbelievable banality ! To pass the wearisome hours in smoking-room, tea-room or library, prevented from settling down to any work by the feeling that something may be happening and you not there ! What is the compensation ? Why do men do it ? "

This is a view which would condemn every governing assembly in the world. We ordinary mortals can only do our best to meet the needs of mankind as we see them.

The picture drawn by this writer is a false one. It is true that the hours of the House of Commons are long, and that some of its rules and customs ought to be improved. But to suggest indirectly that it is useless and might well be abolished is nonsense.

If six hundred other men were put in the place of those who are now there, would the "mediocrity" of the House be changed?

Nor is the banality so bad as all that. Wearisome hours are rarely passed in the manner described. In twenty-seven years' Membership, I have not been in the Smoke-Room half a dozen times. This is an exception, and I claim no credit for it. But I can say certainly that men who happen to be in one room are not usually fearful of what may be happening in another; and there is always something to do.

1937 Members are often tired, but seldom bored. Even if the work they have to carry out is dull for them at times, and critics find much to wonder at in it, the Government of the country must still be carried on.

The freedom of the House is never better illustrated than during the daily question hour. Important Ministers may be questioned by the humblest Members; and if those Members master rules and procedure, they can often render substantial service to their constituents. Dictators may announce decrees and enforce them. Ministers must have regard to the law collectively made by elected Members.

A young M.P. told me the other day that it had taken him two years to master the intricacies of Parliamentary procedure. They are certainly complicated, but they are clear, and they are very far-reaching. They need to be, in a House where the "Lord" Privy Seal may be a commoner while the Monarch himself may not even enter the House of Commons!

Our Parliamentary traditions are the envy of most countries of the world. A few anachronisms do not detract from the value of the system. Dictators jeer at us, but the proofs remain. In the course of centuries we have had only about ten years of Dictatorship in England, and those were unhappy years for the people.

Our differences in the Commons are real and far-reaching, but in temper and manner we are better than most. We can fight hard, but we fight fairly. Affairs such as the Stavisky scandal cannot occur here. The hand of the assassin is not a recognised political tool. We do not always like each other in Parliament, but we all try, in the main, to work together for the country's good.

The central defect in our system of government is 1937 traceable to the growth of a Parliamentary method by which, on the defeat of a Government, or even the defeat of a single Minister, the Cabinet usually resigns. The Government must then be changed or a General Election put a result to the test.

There may be occasions when such a course is justifiable, but as a general rule it is bad. It means not government by the House of Commons, but government by a score of Ministers who will not accept a House of Commons decision.

If freedom of discussion in Parliament is real, freedom of action should be real also. There are, of course, occasions when an issue is left to a free vote of the House. Such questions are usually minor ones, and our system would be improved by making Parliamentary freedom more substantial in practice, and by making much more common the acceptance of the collective will of the Members.

Something might be done, too, to avoid the occurrence of " scenes " in the House. But these are rarer than many electors believe.

A report of any outburst at Westminster is always widely spread. Ordinary Parliamentary questions are not news of general interest, but an instance of disorder, a conflict between Members, or between a Member and Mr. Speaker, is offered as drama, though the end of it may taper away to comedy. A level of tragedy is rarely reached.

The House is never praised for its good behaviour, though that is its normal state.

1937 The fact is that while there are many men at Westminster who never speak at all, there are others who have never mastered the art of self-restraint far enough to enable them to listen. There follow instances of lapse, with an ensuing sense of regret. When outbursts take place in the House of Commons, there is always a feeling of general sorrow that they have occurred.

If rowdyism became a part—even a small part—of the Parliamentary method of any Party, it would damage that Party even more than it would harm the good name of the House.

Even the view that it is the duty of an Opposition to oppose is carried too far when disagreement is exhibited by acts of individual or group disorder. Members of Parliament are chosen not only to speak but to listen.

They should set an example to provincial legislators, and try to show the highest form of government which can be attained. Those who create scenes are illogical in this—that they wish their protest to be heard though they themselves refuse to listen to others.

There are occasions in Parliament when strong protest is called for. I had such an experience when I was leading the Parliamentary Labour Party. We felt we were being unfairly denied time to speak by the action of the Government.

Many who were then acting with me suggested making a scene and facing the risks of suspension. I insisted on another course. We recorded our protest in fitting short speeches, and then emphasised it by walking in a body and in an orderly manner out of the House. This implanted our case in the public mind more effectively, I think, than if we had indulged in a Parliamentary row.

Disorder in the House is often the result simply of overwork and tired nerves. Very late or all-night sittings have become much more frequent of recent years. No time is so trying to a man's temper as the hours of early dawn.

But not even this can excuse rudeness to the Chair, or refusals to obey the authority of the Speaker.

The Speaker is an impartial official chosen by the House itself. Business is impossible unless the ruling of the Chair is accepted. No Member ought to subject the House to the ordeal of expelling him for breaking rules to which he has agreed. He may protest, plead, appeal—but not vulgarly defy.

Those who make scenes in the House of Commons are not always Labour men. In other parts of the House there are culprits whose conduct is deliberately calculated often enough to stir up or continue rowdyism in others.

Unmannerly behaviour is the resort of those who lack fluency to speak. They are inarticulate ; they stammer for words in which to express burning wrongs ; and men of expensive education who deliberately twit them at such times are more guilty than they if a passionate outburst results.

Some of the worst speakers and greatest failures in the House of Commons have been so-called "business 1937 men." It has many times been suggested that the country needs an assembly of business men at Westminster. Heaven preserve us from such a fate !

No particular experience in early or middle life is a guarantee for acquiring attributes for Parliamentary usefulness. But men who throughout life have been absorbed in personal pursuits and money-making are, as a rule, the least fitted to take up Parliamentary service in the autumn of their days.

Many instances can be quoted in proof of what I say. Men like Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain had business training in early life, but they went to the House of Commons before the training had spoiled them. On the other hand, such figures as Churchill and

Lloyd George had no business training whatever, yet they swiftly reached the highest positions and served with unquestionable distinction. Philosophers like Arthur Balfour have been successful in the Commons, and dilettante novelists like Disraeli.

I cannot at the moment recall the name of a great business man who has been a great politician. I do not, of course, mean that business training is a disqualification for Parliamentary service, but it is no recommendation.

It may be noted that whenever payment for Parliamentary services or a proposed increase in Ministers' salaries have been under consideration, business men in their thousands have raised the cry that public life would be overrun by adventurers and carpet-baggers. Yet many of them turn anxiously towards Westminster, after a life spent in business, merely because of the social advertisement of becoming an M.P. To such men it is just something else to acquire from the People.

Cabinets do not heed what such Members say—if they ever say anything !

1937 Business men in the Commons have frequently stood by and watched arrangements being made in foreign or home affairs which any knowledge of international trade must have convinced them would produce eventual depression, from which they and their workers must suffer. But they have said nothing and done nothing.

If the business men in the Commons confined themselves to giving advice on those aspects of politics which touch commerce, they might perhaps be of some use. This, however, they will by no means do.

Events in Ireland, India, Egypt, the Continent and the Colonies often hinge on the question of business relations ; and internal problems such as unemployment might, one would suppose, benefit from advice from great employers.

Yet when any such question arises, the business men in the House, who have been voluble on matters which they do not understand, instantly refuse to help. Then, indeed, their one cry is that there must be no political interference with business. This is ridiculous. All the more important decisions of statesmen have the closest bearing on trade.

In the present House of Commons, we have men claiming great business experience. They sometimes speak in debates on unemployment, housing and so on ; but they rarely offer anything that is of the slightest value, and seem powerfully attracted by points of infinitesimal importance.

They speak out loudly against Trade Unions, but they seldom touch on any fundamental fact concerning them.

Such people have much at stake. Two per cent of the property owners of England own 64 per cent of the national wealth.

These people comprise a ruling caste which is one of the most remarkable phenomena of the world to-day. The House of Commons and the House of Lords are its Clubs ; among its bastions and its tools for gaining greater prosperity are the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. The Bank of England is its humble servitor. It lives in the public schools and country houses, and the Empire is its well-paying shop-window.

This caste absorbs nearly all the national income and owns far too much power. Take, for example, the land of London. One peer owns no less than two hundred and seventy acres of the West End—an incalculably valuable private possession.

Only about forty thousand of the eight million 1937
inhabitants of London own any land at all, and most of them have but a back garden. All the really valuable slices are in the hands of twenty men.

There are about one hundred thousand men and women in England with incomes over £2,000 a year, who take 16 per cent of the national income ; there are eighteen million (over 90 per cent of our wage-earners) whose wages are under £250 a year, and who get barely more than half of the national income between them. Of those who die in England, only one in four leaves as much as £100 worth of property.

The House of Commons represents a great concentraion of wealth. In 1934, 170 Members held 650 company directorships. One M.P. had 34 !

Of the 729 peers who comprise the House of Lords, 246 live on the rents of land they did not earn, 112 are directors in Insurance companies, 74 in financial or investment houses, 67 in banks, 64 in railway companies, 49 in shipbuilding or engineering companies, and so on.

Of these 729 peers, 371—or more than one-half—never once spoke in any debate in the Lords from 1919 to 1931 ; 111 never voted in a single division ; the average number taking part in a division was 83 out of the 729 !

These figures would be even more disgraceful were it not that whenever any private or property interest is assailed in the Lords, the lame and aged laggards manage to attend in very large numbers. Without such occasions, the peers' own record of their inattention to the nation's business would be scathing indeed.

It is obvious from these figures that only about one peer in every fifteen takes the slightest real interest in his duty as a legislator. Never was the motto, "*Noblesse oblige*" more farcical.

The fact is that for many years most of the peers have looked upon the Upper House as a place where a few men, loyal to their own small class, are self-sacrificing enough to go and stop all progressive measures offered by the Commons which might assail the peers' divine rights. If they attended in force zealously to discuss all measures submitted to the Lords, one could forgive them something ; but when they "spend their time huntin', shootin' and fishin'," and appear at Westminster in any numbers simply as obstructions to progress, their usefulness to the nation's legislature has ceased.

1937 I am in favour of abolishing the House of Lords. The members could still serve in the Commons if they were elected—and if they wished to do so. To give them, as at present, a power greater than the elected representatives of the nation, and greater than the Monarch himself (for even he may not deny the will of the Commons, though the Lords may do so), is an anachronism to which historians of the future will point in wonder.

The present system holds up many efforts at social progress because the Lords, whose swollen incomes would be more justly distributed by it, are in the position of judge and jury trying cases in which it is proposed that they themselves should be fined ! That they dismiss such cases is human nature but bad politics.

In a lesser degree, the holding of so many company directorships and such an aggregation of wealth by Members of the House of Commons errs in the same way. I am in favour of Members being paid highly enough to cover their expenses and keep them comfortably, but I think that the membership of the House of Commons should never be a short cut to fortune.

It is obviously unfair that a nation consisting of a great 1937
number of poor men and a few rich ones should be ruled by an assembly containing a great number of rich men and a few poor ones. It does not matter to what Party such Members belong.

I have indicated only a few changes which I think might be made in Parliaments of the future. It is difficult to look forward very far in such a changing world ; but I have little doubt that some of the changes I have outlined may commence in my own lifetime, and that some of my younger readers will see a British Parliamentary system as changed from the present one as the latter is from that which obtained when I was a young man wondering whether the impregnable fortress of Westminster would ever be stormed by a Government of working men.

Chapter XXII

Trade Unions and Labour—What the Unions have done—The Block Vote—Why Unions were needed—Boyhood memories of the mill workers—Class warfare is bad Socialism—Labour and the jingoists—Why join the Army ?—Labour and religion—Lenin was wrong.

I must say a little more about the Trade Union side of Labour work. I have been a Trade Union official upwards of forty-five years ; most of the men who helped to formed the vanguard of Parliamentary Labour were from the Trade Unions ; and I cannot omit all mention of this form of Labour organisation.

The impression was spread years ago that the Trade Unions enjoyed within the Labour Party an unfair and dominating authority regarding the selection of Parliamentary candidates, the internal direction of the Party, and the settlement of policy. The impression, though never justified by facts, still survives, and is often made a point of argument. 1937

The Party has had only two Secretaries, and neither was chosen for Trade Union reasons.

The societies and groups connected with the Party which are not Trade Unions have their representation specially guaranteed by the Standing Orders of the Party. Trade Union Candidates enjoy no preference with regard to the choice of constituencies described as "safe seats," except in a few areas where the coal industry provides almost the sole occupation. Even there, many candidates have been chosen because of their personal merits and qualities, in fair competition with men who have been miners.

At every election Trade Union nominees have suffered many defeats, and they have fought without prospect of victory in divisions which can be classed as backward areas in the by-elections of the past few years. Men who were not Trade Union nominees have been selected and elected, too, in preference to men put forward by Trade Unions.

At the last election the whole of the candidates nominated in Lancashire by the Textile Trade Unions were defeated in divisions where the textile vote could be overwhelming if used in their favour.

No Trade Union need try to satisfy its own critics. 1937
For on the one hand there is the complaint that Trade Unions are unfitted for the broader activities of political life and should limit themselves to industrial and wage questions ; while on the other there is the cry that they engage too much in international affairs and spend too much of their time and energy in Parliamentary conflict.

They have never received the credit due to them for their lead in the fight for Parliamentary liberty. It was they who uttered the first expressions of revolt against the restricted franchise and the narrow Parliamentary system which, until this century, could not possibly be fairly called representative Government.

The Trade Unions were the first real pioneers in the work which in due course secured for this country proper political freedom.

Perhaps the most bitter denunciation of the Trade Unions is that they act as a despot at Party conferences, and frequently set aside wisdom by the power of the Block Vote.

That vote is welcomed when it is given in favour of those who denounce it when it is against them. Then, of course, it is something akin to a beneficent extension of the powers of Providence.

At worst, the Block Vote is simply that part of democracy which gives voting strength according to the number represented. It has been in use for years without any real signs of grievance, and was accepted years ago as an improvement on any prior procedure. It is the rule in most Democratic gatherings.

If it can ever be modified to Party and national advantage, changes will certainly be made.

The Trade Unions and the Labour Party are but two expressions of one purpose. They were born at different stages in the history of the last century. The Trade Unions were the parent organisation, but now the child feels in moments of irritation (as is the nature of children) that its father is an old fool and does not move with the times.

The growth of the Labour Party was comparatively rapid because the Unions had done much of the spadework already. Few would claim that the Unions provided the Party with its soul or with its fine missionary spirit, but they have indisputably supplied much of the sinews of war, and a ready-made organisation for marshalling the rank and file of the workers for political ends.

It is, I think, true to say that the presence of the 1937 Trade Unions in their British form has checked or prevented the follies seen abroad of proposing a strike or using the threat of organised violence for every misery or injustice which may arise.

Lessons from other lands have shown us the necessity of persuading angry men to resort to the ballot and maintain a maximum of unity to make it effective.

Long before the Labour Party was born, I held the belief that it was best to have the political and industrial purpose of Labour function through one organisation alone. In the beginnings of independent Labour effort, this could be no more than an unimpressive aspiration, and it is now unlikely for many years to come.

The wage earners were not ready then for unqualified independent political action. The Socialist purpose as we now express it had not even been dreamed of then. The very title, " Labour Party," had its terrors, and the first organisation which Trade Unions were invited to join for political ends was prudently named the " Labour Representation Committee."

Throughout past years, the growth of the Parliamentary power of Labour has been stimulated directly by the fierce opposition that has been offered to Trade Union activities. Workmen who would have been content with Union representation recruited under the Party banner aroused themselves when efforts were made to crush Union growth.

When the Courts or the Commons proclaimed their antagonism to organised Labour in the Unions, millions of Union men were stirred to march along the road of political action, to alter unjust laws created to oppose them. Sluggards who had no politics other than the Party label became political zealots and demanded candidates from their Unions at a time when these were difficult to find and impossible to finance from other sources.

Class legislation was common enough long before working men were accused of demanding it. Upper class interests have long been pursued, no matter at what cost to those below. When this tendency went too far, in Queen Victoria's reign, the Labour Party came into being to attempt to gain just industrial legislation, workmen's compensation, the abolition of sweated labour, reduced hours, fixed holidays, proper housing and education, health reforms and general working-class welfare.

The definite Socialist aims for nationalising industries and equalising opportunity and comfort, such as we work for to-day, would have frightened the pioneers of my youth had they been openly expressed then.

I have often been challenged as to whether all the Trade Union endeavour and political activity has been worth while. The answer is emphatically—" Yes ! "

How much change would have been wrought in working-class conditions without Trade Unionism, we cannot say. My opinion is that, without such an outlet the anger of the multitude at continual injustice would 1937
have found refuge in lawlessness and disorder.

We do know that before there was a Parliamentary

Labour Party the requests of the workers were always denied. Long before political Labour was born, there existed small groups of men and women not of the working class who were driven in moods of pity to help the hungry and suffering ; but pity in this country has never been a satisfactory substitute for justice, and when the worker stands sullenly like an ox in the furrow, refusing to budge, then justice must be given or peril will ensue.

Within my own memory, boys and girls in the cotton-factory areas were sent, at eight or nine years old, to work twelve and fourteen hours a day. I have seen "little piecers," in the days when I was one myself, driven weeping from factories where they had fallen asleep after a day's slavery ; I have read of how they stumbled blindly homewards, knuckling their eyes to keep themselves awake and staggering like drunkards ; and when they got home they fell asleep on their knees while saying their prayers.

Later they were wakened, at about four or five o'clock, and sent stumbling out into the darkness to start work again at the mill. I speak of cotton, but other trades exercised similar slavery.

Lord Shaftesbury was warned in the Commons that it would be an unwarrantable interference with the liberty of these children to pass a Parliamentary Act which prevented them from working in this way if they pleased ! Some who shared this tender concern for the rights of free Englishmen, added that "immense interests might be plunged into confusion by the rash legislation he suggested."

Human life was flung wholesale into the money-making machines, until Trade Unions grew so strong
1937 that they could demand and enforce improvements which would not have been here yet had workmen continued to go in little groups, cap in hand, to ask humbly for them.

The results obtained by Labour during its two short periods of office have been minute compared with our desires. But on each occasion we were in a minority at Westminster, and had to whittle down our measures in order not to have them thrown out altogether by our watchful opponents.

But if we have failed in our greater ambitions, it has been worth the trial, for there is permanent value in all endeavour. Had good fortune not enabled me, for example, to achieve some personal success, I should still have carried with me throughout the years the gladness of the labour. If I had never played a part in politics at all, some participation in Trade Union work could be placed on record as showing a practical yield to large numbers of poor people.

When I began that work, most employers would not send even a postcard in reply to a civil communication. The doors of their offices and board rooms were slammed in our faces. They branded us as mischief-makers.

All that has been changed, and the workmen to-day has usually a fair say in the conditions of his own life.

Harm was done at various stages of the battle for recognition by Trade Union and Parliamentary representatives who proclaimed that Socialism must necessarily be a perpetual class struggle till one class is abolished while the other greedily grasps its opponent's comforts.

Nobody has ever dispelled this idea more completely than Keir Hardie, who wrote as long ago as 1903 :

> " To claim for the Socialist Movement that it is a class war, dependent for its success on the class consciousness of one section of the community, is to do Socialism an injustice and indefinitely postpone its triumph. It is lowering it to the level of a faction fight.
>
> " Socialism offers a platform broad enough for all to stand upon who accept its principles. It makes war upon a system, not upon a class."

To arbitrate with employers is not to turn traitor to Labour principles. To work for industrial peace meant simply that we refused to promote hunger in order to encourage Socialism. A true conception of Socialism is 1937 not a state of class hate but of class peace through universal justice.

Socialism must rest upon general consent and belief in its fairness. Our job is to make Socialists not only from those who have a grievance, but from the others who will not tolerate the infliction of a grievance upon their less fortunate fellows.

Loyal team work has effected miracles in Labour endeavour in the past. The place for critics is within the Party, where their plans for better strategy will always be given a hearing. They have no right to proclaim outside the Party that those who remain in it are traitors to principles to which the critics alone remain true.

1937 Some of our most ruinous controversies not only within the Labour Party, but throughout the world, still arise from class rivalries, sectarian prejudices, and a narrow Nationalism sustained by the boastful words of men who mistake puffed-up pride for patriotism, and vanity for love of country.

Men commonly boast that they are distinguished from the lower creation because of their power to reason. How far does such reason extend ?

Millions of money are being spent every year to prevent sickness and ease the trials of old age. It is the pride of our best public servants that people live longer now because of such labours.

Life is deemed to be so precious that Parliament rejects a Bill which would permit doctors silently and painlessly to terminate the lives of people whose existence seems worse than death because their every minute is a drawn-out agony. Yet, while this is being done and Heaven is praised for it, men of genius in every civilised country prepare to organise for the butchery of millions, and sanction wholesale slaughter in the name of God.

To a world whose every Government is busy trying to better the condition of its nation while simultaneously making ready for a war which will destroy the very sap of its growth, Puck makes the most fitting comment when he exclaims: "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

Labour has been repeatedly attacked in Britain for opposing inflamed jingoism, and the Trade Unions have been castigated for discussing possible General Strike action in the event of a declaration of a war which would kill hundreds of thousands of their members. The Trade Unions are less ready to fling themselves bodily into campaigns to form a great army to protect capitalist interests and sustain blundering war policy.

Among the appeals being made to our young men to join the Army is a poster showing an armed soldier standing alert and ready to resist any attack on his country. "Defend your Heritage" is the legend addressed to those who read.

I understand the appeal, and I know how it affects some millions of men who wonder about this heritage, and who have no possession whatever in any part of the country for which they are urged to fight. A few years ago, certain patriotic phrases were blindly accepted by thousands who did not reason, and who died without ever knowing that they had been misled.

1937 Nowadays, those whose part in Britain's heritage is permission to work for the profits of others within these borders realise that a very few people own the substance of Britain, and that sentiment is all that is left over for the millions who are called upon to join the Army.

We are all, of course, proud of our country, but there is an underlying feeling to-day that we ought to have a country to be proud of.

When accusations about patriotism fail in their effect, Labour is attacked from a new angle, and accused of supporting atheism and preparing a sinister campaign for the destruction of the Church. The only reason for such a method of assault on us is, I suppose, that Lenin and others in Russia opposed religious practice, and have been held up ever since as an awful warning to all of what the Socialists are really like.

I see no more reason for comparing British Socialists to Lenin than for likening the Prime Minister and his following to Conservative-minded Confucians in China.

Like many men of intellectual attainments, Lenin could not let religion alone, and wrongly concluded that hostility to it must be a feature of all Socialist doctrine. In one of his letters to Gorky, he wrote :

> " I cannot and will not deal with people whose aim is to advocate a union of scientific Socialism with religion. It is absurd to dispute and useless to wear down one's nerves. Philosophy must be kept separate from Party affairs."

Russia, when Lenin was an agitator, suffered from a religion greatly perverted, many of whose priests terrorised the population for ends of personal gain. Religion went hand in hand with a rotten autocracy which advocated slavery for all but a selfish and effete nobility. Lenin opposed such religion because it failed in its purpose, not because it was religion ; and in Britain to-day hundreds of quick-tempered people are lost to the Church every time certain war-like priests open their mouths. 1937

But these people are not all Socialists. The great majority of British Labour supporters believe that Socialism is a social and economic doctrine whereby the land, the transport services, the means of production and the main resources for supplying the material needs of life, shall eventually become national property.

Such a Socialist scheme would leave the needs of the soul untouched, and retain for each individual complete personal freedom concerning his relation to the hereafter. Yet I have always thought that for those who seek, many Socialist teachings—all the vital ones, indeed—may be found within the compass of the Four Gospels.

Chapter XXIII

Rumours of wars—Are we arming for defence ?—Famous men speak about war—Christ and the warmonger clergy—The poor will suffer next time—The problem of the German colonies—Labour serves the British people—What remains to be done—You can do it.

As I write this concluding chapter of my political memories, the diplomatic telephones are urgently ringing and the Chancellories of Europe murmur uneasily on the verge of each recurring crisis. During the past forty years I have watched Ministers toiling to avert many international perils, and I have sat in some Cabinets which have been faced with grave problems ; but I do not recall a period which has left me with a more profound uneasiness than does this year of grace.

In a world which only recently massacred about ten million young men as a bloody sacrifice to Mars, there are once again wars and rumours of wars.

Warships are steaming at full speed, bombing aircraft 1937 are darkening the skies ; foreign legionaries are at each other's throats ; undefended towns are being smashed and people posioned from the clouds.

By order of the present Government, we are feverishly preparing for war on a greater scale than any nightmare dream could imagine. Stand aside for a moment and examine impersonally the spectacle of great nations impoverishing their citizens and robbing their social services so as to get ready to poison and kill each other.

All countries to-day claim to be arming for defence only. Even in Japan the abused word " Defence " is used. The world is acquiring an overwhelming number of bombing aircraft in order not to use them! For how can a bomber be used for defence?

Armaments have sometimes delayed, but never prevented, a war. They have only made it the more inevitable. The delay has been used to build mightier fighting machines so that the eventual slaughter shall be the more great.

We are told that rearmament is making employment by which many can now secure the means to live, but meanwhile they are forging weapons by which other men—and perhaps they also—shall surely die.

Peace is the most supreme political interest of any country, yet Britain and the rest are now preparing not for peace but for war. Another war such as will surely come if armaments are not soon reduced would be an indelible disgrace to the statesmen of England, and an unforgivable crime against humanity.

1937 Yet wherever we turn to-day, we find children being taught to play at soldiers, and the slogan being taught that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton. Labour has striven long and unceasingly for adequate playing-fields for the young. Now the Conservatives have suddenly welcomed and financed a great National Fitness Campaign, so that the playing-fields of Eton and elsewhere may produce a more valuable quality of cannon-fodder.

A famous member of the Government recently admitted openly that the Government's wish to increase our physical training was based to some extent on military considerations.

It is only since the dire failure of the national recruiting campaign that the national fitness campaign has taken its place. The latter includes an ever-increasing quantity of drilled games—the first step towards the creation of the woodenly saluting legions of pistol-armed, treble-voiced baby legions of Italy, Germany and Russia.

Experts like Sir John Orr and Sir F. Gowland Hopkins have advised the Government that:

> "Physical exercises and training will fail if pressed upon young people whose constitutions have been impaired, stature dwarfed and strength sapped by malnutrition. . . ."

and Sir F. Gowland Hopkins has stated categorically that: "What is the matter with the health of the nation is that the workers do not have enough to eat." The Government's intention is obvious, therefore, when it prefers to pay for drill for the nation, rather than food. 1937

It may seem that I am offering opinions tinged by my own views and those of my Party. Let me therefore quote a few recent statements made by prominent authorities certainly *not* of my own political persuasion.

> EARL BALDWIN: "The bomber will always get through . . . The only defence is offence . . . Which means that you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves . . ."
>
> SIR THOMAS INSKIP (Minister of Defence): "From twenty to twenty-five feet thickness of concrete is necessary to keep out a 500-lb. bomb. . . . It is quite impossible for the Government to erect buildings to protect people on such a scale as that . . ."
>
> SQUADRON-LEADER WRIGHT: "What we need is an overwhelming superiority of bombing machines of high performance and long range . . ."
>
> WING-COMMANDER HODSOLL (Chief of the Home Office Air Raids Precautions Dept.): "A million instructors in anti-gas precautions will be required in Britain . . ."
>
> THE BISHOP OF LONDON: "The real danger to the peace of the world is the pacifist . . ."
>
> THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY: "Christian people are entitled to draw the sword . . ."
>
> AN OFFICIAL OF ST. DUNSTAN'S HOSPITAL FOR THE BLIND: "In all these cases there is not the slightest doubt that wartime gassing has brought on the blindness some twenty years later . . ."
>
> THE ARCHDEACON OF COVENTRY: "Service in the armed forces of the Crown is an honourable and Christian form of service . . ."

I have not selected or carefully filed these views; they are a few which come to hand as I write, and are representative of a host of others from experts of all classes. The first two are sincere and truthful, but they draw such a picture of air-raiding as should send any sane Christian to his knees to ask fearfully for a new sanity for a maddened world.

The statement from Squadron-Leader Wright smacks of the militarised killer, while Wing-Commander Hodsoll, needing a million adult instructors to teach the use of gas-masks, will either put industry at a standstill or make every man find employment by teaching his neighbour.

As for certain war-like Ministers of God, what may we say of them? I would say that some of them are wolves
1937 in sheep's clothing. They prate of following Christ, who rebuked Peter for drawing the sword to save a Divine Master! They shout like proud priests of Mars! They pray in public every day for peace on earth, and say that the world's peril comes from the peacemaker. Christ said: "Blessed are the peacemakers," but his Minister says that armed force is a Christian form of service.

No statesman would be tolerated in public life who so denied the Leader of a Party.

The Bishop of Birmingham has something to say against the views of his superiors:

> "There is an explosive bomb that will break up our sewers and gas-mains and telephone exchanges. There is the incendiary bomb hardly used during the late war. It is constructed of thermite. Thermite will melt steel. In addition, you have the poison-gas bomb. A gas-mask cannot be of any value to children or old people, or those who have had any lung trouble. The majority of those here to-day could not effectively use gas-masks against lewisite."

In point of fact, gas-masks may be classed as governmental eye-wash. They protect the head against certain gases, but the gases now loaded in aircraft bombs attack the skin of the hands, or penetrate through the socks or the jacket indiscriminately. They cause death, after great agony, by infecting any portion of skin.

Nothing save a complete gas-proof suit is effective against them ; and when the inhabitant of such a suit tried to feed himself, he would open a vent to the gas, and die just the same.

I have not dealt with the effects of disease-microbe bombs, or of chemicals which can cause madness.

The Government tells us to build bomb-proof and gas-proof chambers in our houses. Unless they are built of twenty-five feet thick concrete, they will not keep out bombs.

Cambridge scientists have shown that " gas-proof rooms " cannot be made gas-proof, and would be nothing more than death-traps. The same scientists have puffed cigarette-smoke through gas-masks. 1937

I wonder if the Archbishop of Canterbury, who thinks it right for Christ's followers to draw the sword that Peter was rebuked for drawing, also thinks it right for Christians to kill women and torture babies with lewisite, phosgene, mustard-gas, chlorine and thermite ?

Over a century ago, the Naval press-gang was abolished as a barbarous threat to the liberty of free men. Yet now the modern priests of the Press-gang in the Commons talk openly of coming conscription for Britain. They will conscript poor men's bodies to die in the protection of the sacred pockets of the arms profiteers. The poor men's wives and children will die, too—horribly, of poison-gas ; but rich men are already buying " funk-holes " in country villages ! Any provincial house-agent can prove the truth of what I say.

These expressions of war hatred are written the more bitterly on finding that we who worked hard for disarmament and the substitution of the League for the sword are driven to the possession of defence weapons because of the increasing risks of attack by Fascist States and the menace to old Democracies by new Dictatorships.

Japanese armies are not in China in defence of Japan, but to annexe more territory.

The Italians did not overrun Abyssinia in defence of Italy, but to acquire the land of another people.

The blunders and barbarities of a few great leaders have led us to the point where lack of the means to resist may invite a crushing blow. That peril is too
1937 great to go unheeded.

In my youth, middle-aged men who felt bitterly towards social injustices said to me, not once but many times, that they could not expect anything better because they were only working men. I felt that they ought to demand the best because they were *working* men. On their toil, England's prosperity depended. The same holds good to-day. On the labours and the votes of the workman, our country's wealth and happiness depend.

How stoically they have endured! Only a hundred years ago, workmen were banished to penal settlements for daring to act together to try to add a shilling a week to their wages. Working boys were hanged for petty thefts which would now bring only a caution and good advice.

I have known dockers who could be called on for an hour's brutally heavy work, be paid fourpence, and then be turned off again. I have known women, once pretty and ambitious, who married soldiers in the War, were almost instantly widowed, and who have since been forced by lack of money to slave as charwomen until now they are ugly, bent, withered and miserable. What lives they have had because their men died "heroes'" deaths!

I have seen social conditions change so vastly for the better that it is hard to realise that this is the same world. The Ministry of Health, which did not exist then, now spends between one and two hundred million pounds each year to help the nation. National Health Insurance, which was brought into being since my time at Westminster, now takes care of about seventeen million persons.

During the reign of George V, the death rate from tuberculosis fell from 1,468 to 718 per million of the population, and infantile mortality from 130 to 57 per thousand. Since the War, more than three million new houses have been built in Britain—which would comfortably house the entire population of Scandinavia.

Much has been done, but more remains to be done. Progress is still painfully slow.

Looking back to the period I described in the opening chapters of my first volume, we see an England proud and feared, rich, oppressive, full of social sores, protected by an "invincible" Navy which was used as a final argument in any world dispute.

1937 In contrast, to-day, many of the internal diseases have been allayed, but while we progress towards national health, we are alternately bombastic and cringing in foreign relations. Our great and costly Navy is no longer an impenetrable steel ring about our coasts, and no longer carries an effective influence whereby other nations may be caused to do our will.

The time has come when changes must take place. The matter of the German colonies, for example, cannot be for ever shelved. The administration of a large part of the earth has been ours for a long time, but unless we progress politically from the present jingoistic outlook, it will soon be lost to us.

British statesmen have much to answer for in the problem of Franco-German relationships. The undercurrent of hostility between those two great neighbours has been the main factor in international disturbances throughout this century, and until their differences are composed, peace in Europe can never be completely assured.

Internally, in Britain, the tendency to resist various necessary changes merely because they have not already been given a testing-period by countries bolder than ourselves must go.

The Capital Levy, nationalisation of the great industries and the banks, and national ownership of the land, are alterations which are urgently needed and overdue. The reduction of the fighting forces, and the commencement of an unwavering policy of peace such as has been pursued successfully for years by Holland and the Scandinavian countries—despite many challenges and irritations—are also vital to our national welfare, and indeed to our continued existence as a first-class State.

Because, many years ago, I believed that only Labour could bring these things about, I agreed to serve in the ranks of Parliamentary Labour. My beliefs are unchanged after some thirty years of work in the Commons; and I hope to see a future Labour Government restore peace, happiness and dignity to my country.

1937 Labour serves the British people because it is a movement *of* the people. We have faced the people's problems ourselves, in our own homes and in the humble homes of our parents. Many of us have found, in political life, not a splendid career but an expression of our religion. A position has not been viewed as a job but as a Cause.

Our way is slow, but it is inevitable. We have long been accustomed to jeers and defeats, and we can afford to wait. I saw Parliamentary Labour start work in this country, and was one of the founders of that endeavour. I shall not see our work come to full fruition, but I am satisfied with what we have done to make ready for the harvest.

When I was a young man, Labour dreamers painfully blotched a question across the political skies: "WHY SHOULD BRITAIN BE UNHAPPY?" Some of the misery has been mitigated since, but the question is still there.

It is for you to answer it.

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